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LIFE OF LORD KITCHENER

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Lord Kitchener, G.C.B., K.C.M.G.
From a portrait by Charles. U. Horsfall
in the National Portrait Gallery

LIFE OF LORD KITCHENER

BY

SIR GEORGE ARTHUR

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1920

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TO THOSE VALIANT AND VICTORIOUS ARMIES, CREATED BY THE FORCEFUL GENIUS OF A WISE AND FAITHFUL SOLDIER—AND PERPETUALLY ASSOCIATED WITH HIS NAME—THESE VOLUMES ARE RESPECTFULLY AND REVERENTLY DEDICATED

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I would ask the indulgence of the public—who may regret that the story of Lord Kitchener's life should not have been entrusted to a biographer of experience—for shortcomings which may mar this book.

My sincere thanks are due to many friends who have lent me letters and excellent advice; and I am under a special debt of gratitude to Major-General Lord Edward Gleichen and Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice for valuable help in describing operations in Egypt and the Sudan and in the Great War.

I would also record my thanks for the facilities offered me by Sir Reginald Brade, the Secretary of the War Office, whose own untiring efforts to lighten Lord Kitchener's labours have been matched by an unswerving loyalty to his memory.

PREFACE

By The Marquis of Salisbury

Sir George Arthur has undertaken the difficult task of writing a Life of Lord Kitchener within four years of his death. He has, I believe, in so doing been well advised, and he has produced a work of great value. The interest of Lord Kitchener's career, its extraordinary culmination, the public enthusiasm which in these last critical years centred upon him, and the dramatic end, demand immediate treatment by a friend whose inside knowledge of recent events from Lord Kitchener's own point of view is second to none.

I look upon it as a great privilege that I have been asked to write a few words by way of introduction to this book. It was my good fortune to have been a close friend of Lord Kitchener from the time of his early years in Egypt to the day when the *Hampshire* was lost. He had earned and always enjoyed the confidence of my father whilst he was Prime Minister, and whenever from time to time he returned from Egypt or South Africa his first visit was to Hatfield. This bond was not broken by my father's death, and I have therefore had very special opportunities of knowing him.

Lord Kitchener was a solitary figure, solitary in the sense that he stood mentally and morally aloof from other men. It was reflected in his appearance. It is unnecessary to the reader of the present generation to describe this: a commanding stature, strongly marked features, overhanging brows, arresting eyes, an aspect severe—even intimidating. It might be said that he was a man whose resolution was as inevitable as fate, who would move to his determined end without compunction and even without mercy. Nor to the superficial listener would his habitual conversation have modified this impression. Indeed, he seemed to wish to be so estimated. And yet no conclusion would have been more misleading. It was indeed true that he considered weakness a crime and sentiment as involving a danger to vigorous action, but probably this was his conviction because he was acutely conscious of the softer side of his own character. For this stern soldier was the man who shed tears upon the spot where Gordon had fallen, the man who would upon some excuse of pretended business spend hours in order to do an old friend a kindness, the man who was surrounded by a Staff who worshipped him. The attitude indeed of his Staff towards him was characteristic of him. Interwoven with firmness of purpose there was in him almost the quality of a child—the simplicity of a child and a measure of a child's irresponsible audacity—which created towards him amongst his intimate subordinates an attitude of affectionate amusement alongside of their profound admiration and respect. To a man of this simplicity and deep sentiment I need not say devoted patriotism was natural.

But the moral fineness of Lord Kitchener's character showed itself on another side in a noteworthy cleanliness of mind. None will forget the words in his address in 1914 to the troops as they entered upon the great struggle, urging them to treat all women with perfect courtesy. This was a matter of no surprise to those who knew his attitude towards women—a chivalry of mind belonging to a bygone age which placed them on a pedestal. I recall at a play in London his resentment at some note of coarse disrespect where he considered there should only be reverence. Amongst officers a certain liberty of speech is to be expected, but I have been told that at Lord Kitchener's table, amongst his Staff, nothing was said which might not have been said before a woman.

If he was in truth a man of sentiment, he was also pre-eminently a man of imagination. Something of this was due to his temperament, something, no doubt, to the circumstances of his life. Thrown by these in his early manhood amongst the profound influences of the East, we may be sure the development of his character on this side was stimulated. Like many other Englishmen of a similar experience he was not without a touch of the mystic. But this quality was not merely imagination, it was the imagination of a bold and independent mind. His mental vision could see what others could not see, not merely because they are relatively blind, but because their belief is bounded by their limited horizon. Not only could he see, he could conceive: he had faith. Moreover, it was a practical faith; it led directly to practical consequences. He foresaw that the war would last for years at a time when almost

every one thought it would be over in months; therefore the country must husband its resources. He had faith that the nation would rise to the effort; therefore the manhood of the country must be mobilised, we must dare to think in millions. The thing he believed could be done: the thing was done. These are written indelibly in the pages of British history.

But in this faculty of imagination Lord Kitchener was, as it were, all of one piece. I have read a wonderful sketch which he made of a possible attack by Russia upon India. It was years ago, when he was Commander-in-Chief there in circumstances which have entirely passed away. He conceived the combined movements of a Russian Army, worked out to the smallest detail, with all the skill of a technical expert. This was the work of a practical imagination which did not awake for the first time in 1914. So it was also in his private life. Many were the hours which he spent at Hatfield and elsewhere weaving plans for the embellishment of Broome, the seat in Kent which he had bought and to which his heart was devoted. Alas, Broome was still unfinished when he died! He had not perhaps the knowledge of architecture that he had of war, and I am afraid it was not so orthodox; but in its service his imagination was as independent and his confidence in his judgement certainly as great.

In its bearing, at any rate on public affairs, this independence of mind was a quality of high value; but it made him impatient of checks. Routine and red tape he utterly despised. He was a difficult man to convince that he was wrong; that a project of his was impossible he would never admit. Such was the

momentum of his character that very seldom did men call his wishes in question. Moreover, he did not understand delay, and his officers knew better than to suggest it. If a subordinate were incapable of executing his directions, rather than abandon them he was inclined to carry them out himself. Thus it came about that he bore sometimes a heavier burden of work than any one man could carry. He had no skill in argument, and had no respect for it: it seemed to him beside the point. Like other men of action, but in a special degree, his conclusions were instinctive, and the important thing in his eyes was that a decision should be right, not that it could be defended. It did not make it less right because he had never learnt the art of controversy. Partly perhaps for this reason, but partly from a dignity of mind conforming to the high plane of the other qualities I have mentioned, he had a striking reluctance to defend himself when attacked. Such a temperament, it is evident, had certain defects from an administrative point of view under a Parliamentary system.

But I have gone far enough. Every strong individuality has its shadows as well as its lights. No attempt ought to be made in these few pages to fill in the character. Enough at any rate has been said to indicate the extraordinary attraction of the personality which is portrayed in this book, and what I have written may to some small extent serve to show why in old days Kitchener was so much at home at Hatfield. The broad conception, the farseeing eye, the sanity of judgement, the contempt for political sham, the light-hearted iconoclasm, the personal simplicity, the patriotic devotion: such a man had much in common with the then owner of Hatfield.

He is the man whose history is related in this book. He lived for his country: he saved his country: he died in her service. His countrymen will not forget.

LORD KITCHENER AND THE NEW ARMY, AND THE PART IT PLAYED IN THE GREAT WAR

By Earl Haig

The German plan of campaign was to overwhelm France by one mighty rush and then to deal with Russia.

Had this plan succeeded, as it so nearly did, the Channel ports would at once have fallen under German control and the outlook for the British Empire would indeed have been black. Fortunately it did not succeed. We gained a respite on the Marne, the causes of which we need not pause to consider here.

The Empire may thank God that it was given not only this respite but the man capable of taking advantage of it—the man who had the foresight to recognise the opportunity; the faith required to seize it; the courage, determination and energy, the greatness of mind and soul, to undertake so immense a task and to overcome the disbelief and opposition which it called forth. The man too—to all appearance the only one we had at that crisis—in whom the nation had the trust and confidence which made the task possible.

Who can doubt now that but for this man and his work Germany would have been victorious?

Lord Kitchener created the means of winning the war. Not only that—he understood how to help those whose task it was to apply these means, in the field, to the end in view. He knew and sympathised with the Commanders in the field. He gave full consideration to their views. He did all that he could to provide them with what was necessary for the performance of the tasks entrusted to them. And he gave them his trust and his unfailing support. How much all this means to a Commander perhaps only those with experience of command can fully realise, and Lord Kitchener himself was not lacking in that experience.

His new divisions were sent to the front in a time incredibly short to those acquainted with the difficulties of turning raw material into soldiers. In the field they proved a match, from the outset, for the troops of what was then the greatest military power in the world. They soon proved more than a match for them. Steadily and relentlessly they fought them down until they had established the final mastery displayed in the autumn of 1918.

It is impossible to give too much credit for this to the raw material and to the troops—Old Army, New Army, and Territorials. It is equally impossible to do too much honour to the man who created the New Armies, whose great faith and great work they justified so fully.

The great part played by the New Armies in fighting down the enemy's power of resistance and in the final victory is well known. Their creation was a wonderful work, and it has given wonderful results.

The pity is that the man to whom the Empire owes so much of the work and its results did not live to see the victory. Perhaps it would have come sooner if he had been with us to the end.

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Sous l'if ou le cyprès ne cherchez pas la place
Où du dernier sommeil dort le grand Kitchener.
Les noms qui sont gravés sur le marbre s'effacent;
Mais il a pour tombeau l'immensité des mers.
Passagers ici-bas, nos pauvres mains sont prêtes
Avec des fleurs d'un jour à couronner son front,
Mais c'est la grande voix de la grande tempête
Qui, dans l'éternité. répètera son nom.

From *Le Mouchoir,* the French journal of the trenches.

CHAPTER I

It may well be said that biographies—however precise and exhaustive—of prominent men do little to alter the estimate already formed of them by the public. Their appearances have been so many, their utterances so resonant, their lives so continuously within view, that it is difficult to throw any really new rays on careers and characters which have been thoroughly exposed to the light.

Circumstances, however, conspired with his own inclination to withhold Lord Kitchener much from the general gaze; thus it is possible to think that any narrative, however inadequate, of his life—albeit spent in the public service and open to public scrutiny—may withdraw a screen from many passages of it and reveal traits in his character unsuspected, or at least unrecognised.

Like many other great servants of the Crown, he owed less than nothing of whatever success he achieved or whatever fame he earned to accident of birth or incident of boyhood. His father was a soldier, but his parentage furnished no passport to advancement in any special profession or path in life, and his education missed whatever advantages are to be derived from public school or college experience. His birth took place in Ireland for the very

prosaic reason that his father, Colonel Kitchener,[1] had early in 1850 bought a place called Ballygoghlan, in the counties of Kerry and Limerick, the property including a little village depopulated by the potato famine. While alterations were being made to the house, a shooting-box, Gunsborough Lodge, was rented near Listowel, and here Horatio Herbert Kitchener was born on June 24, 1850, his christening —as was then not unusual—being postponed for three months, and taking place in the church of Aghavallin on September 22.

Through his mother there ran French blood in his veins, but the family of Kitchener, like those of Cripps and Buck with which it intermarried, was of sturdy English stock. Its history opens two and a half centuries ago with the birth in 1666 of Herbert Kitchener's great-great-great-grandfather, Thomas Kitchener of Binstead, near Alton in Hampshire, who, migrating to Suffolk, made himself a new home at Lakenheath, near Mildenhall, where he died in 1731.[2] For three generations this was the family seat, but about the beginning of last century Thomas's great-grandson, William, established himself as a merchant in the City of London, where he engaged in the tea trade with China.

The connection with East Anglia was not severed. William Kitchener's fifth son, Henry Horatio—born in 1805, and named after the East Anglian hero of

1 Colonel Kitchener, after many years' service in the 13th Dragoons, had only recently exchanged into the 9th Foot when he retired from the Army.

2 He is described on his gravestone as "a loyal subject, a faithful friend, and a tender parent," but as having "suffered much through lying lips and a deceitful tongue." Did "lying lips" denounce him as a Jacobite? He was twenty-two years old when William and Mary ousted James II.; thirty-six when Anne came to the throne; forty-eight at the accession of George I. During all those years a charge of Jacobitism might have the gravest consequences.

Trafalgar—took to wife Anne Frances Chevallier,[1] daughter of an East Anglian clergyman, Dr. John Chevallier, vicar of Aspall, Suffolk. The fruit of this union was a family of four sons and one daughter—Henry Elliott Chevallier,[2] born in 1846; Frances Emily Jane;[3] Horatio Herbert, born in 1850; Arthur,[4] born 1852; and Frederick Walter,[5] born in 1858.

About 1857 Colonel Kitchener, who had a taste for acquiring, improving, and disposing of real estate, changed his abode to Crotta House, near Tralee, where he reclaimed a tract of marshy land and enjoyed a reputation for agricultural knowledge. But the migration to Crotta House did not depose Ballygoghlan from its place in the children's affections. For them it was always "home," and every year the family spent the summer months in the rambling old house, made up of various detached dwellings. It was perched on the top of a wooded hill midway between Tarbert and Glynn, its meadows sloping down to the broad Shannon two miles distant; and the river, to which the children either rode or drove a rough pony-cart, was an attraction rivalled only by their own small gardens where Herbert first acquired his lasting love of flowers.

The three elder children were inseparable companions; a contemporary letter describes the senior

1 After her death in 1864 Colonel Kitchener married as his second wife, Mary Emma Green, by whom he had one daughter, Kawara.

2 Became 2nd Earl Kitchener; m. 1877, Eleanor Fanny Lushington, by whom he had one daughter and one son. The latter was constituted his uncle's heir, and succeeded to Broome Park.

3 Married, 1869, Mr. H. R. Parker, of Rothley Temple, Leicestershire.

4 After engaging in scientific work in England went to New Zealand. He died in Sicily in 1907.

5 Major-General Sir Walter served with distinction in Afghanistan, India, the Sudan, South Africa, and again in India; finally becoming Governor of Bermuda, which post he held till his death in 1912.

boy as bright and dominating, the sister, ruling and mothering her brothers in turn, and Herbert contentedly trotting after them. Those who only knew him after the desert sun had tanned and burned him could scarcely believe in the pale golden hair and ultra-fair complexion of his childhood. He was always tall for his age and very slightly built. He was mentioned as "the little boy with the serious face asking questions," and it was said even then that the direct gaze of his blue eyes could be somewhat disconcerting. Quiet and inclined to be silent, he was by no means averse to solitude, and often not strong enough to join in rougher games, but quite other than the rather gloomy infant sometimes depicted.

Not one of the Kitchener boys went to school during childhood; there was indeed no school for them within hail of either Crotta or Ballygoghlan. Their father had his own views about "bringing up," and was perhaps a little before his time in distinguishing between education and instruction and in recognising the importance of fostering mental alertness and of teaching how to learn. Governess and tutor were engaged, and mental attainments were tested at intervals by a near relative, a master at Rugby; but the Classics played very little part in the curriculum. History and geography were made interesting; mathematics were compulsory; a thorough grounding in more than one foreign language was insisted upon, and experiments in engineering and rudimentary afforestation were encouraged.

In 1863 Mrs. Kitchener's critical condition brought about a great domestic change. The home in Ireland was broken up, the family migrating to Switzerland

in search of special medical treatment for the invalid. The following year at Bex, in the Rhone Valley, when Herbert Kitchener was at the age of fourteen, his mother died—the first and the one great sorrow of his life.[1] He and his two younger brothers were transferred from a French school near Geneva to the old Château of Grand Clos, on the northern shore of the lake, where Mr. Bennett, chaplain of the English church at Montreux, specialised in educating boys for life overseas.

Young Kitchener had now a definite object for which to work; he had asked to set aside his father's suggestion—to be carried out later in Egypt—that he should join the cavalry, as he had set his heart on a commission in the Royal Engineers. After two years' study, under rather roving conditions, in France and Switzerland, he came to England in 1866 to be coached by the well-known Woolwich crammer, Mr. George Frost,[2] with whom he stayed in Kensington Square, and who successfully passed him into Woolwich in February 1868.

1 On receiving a peerage from Queen Victoria he asked permission to bear the title of Baron Kitchener of Khartoum in Africa and of Aspall in the county of Suffolk—the latter being the name of his mother's home.

2 When Frost died, a letter from Kitchener, thanking him for his congratulations after Atbara, was found under the old man's pillow.

CHAPTER II

Neither by his coach nor by his fellow-pupils was Kitchener regarded as clever or considered as "promising," and his Woolwich contemporaries have at different times alluded to him as "in no way remarkable"; "quite an ordinary youth," though with "plenty of common-sense"; "an intensely hard plodder at his books," but "rather slow in learning"; "knowing French and German, but not particularly good at other subjects."

Physically he is pictured as "a lanky youth, rather backward," as "looking anything but robust," as "having outgrown his strength," as "not caring for games," but a very good rider. As it was "difficult to know him well" he "made but few friends," but he was "not unsociable" and "never unpopular."

At Chatham, two short years later, though he is said to have "developed out of all knowledge as responsibilities came upon him," he still "showed no outstanding talents"; indeed, "from the examination point of view," he was considered "below rather than above the average standard of an R.E. officer." At first, too, he "kept much to himself and rode a good deal."

Later there was a change—either in himself, or in

the way in which his companions regarded him when they knew him better; and he was admitted to have "improved decidedly" and "became more companionable." At Aldershot he was "better understood and appreciated, especially by officers senior to himself with whom he would chiefly associate." His work was still "painstaking and thorough," and he was "very fond of riding."

It was a puzzle in after years to his early associates that their acquaintance with the youth had afforded them no inkling of the career of the man, and in the tone of their reminiscences there is even a perceptible tinge of annoyance that he should have become famous without giving them early warning of it. A little later there were signs that if he was habitually silent he was still ahead of his seniors—that he had just that quality of vision in which they were often deficient, and that not infrequently their "instructions" reflected and embodied suggestions which he himself had framed. If the *adolescens* was looked upon as being rather backward, the truth may have been that he was straining his eyes far forward, a little perplexed about his own prospects, and not a little vexed with the doubt that his physical strength might fail him.

At the beginning—as indeed at the end—of his soldier's life his really intimate friends were very few. One such was Claud Conder, whom he first met at Frost's, and under whom he was later to serve in Palestine. The companionship ripened at Woolwich, where the two would study Hebrew together of an evening, trying to learn parts of the Old Testament in the original—an unusual recreation for Gentlemen Cadets. Owing to illness Kitchener

dropped a term at Woolwich and only passed out in December 1870. He spent that Christmas with his father, who was now settled at Dinan, and thus came to enjoy the short but stirring experience in France which echoed through his whole life.

In the struggle between France and Prussia England was officially neutral, but the masses of the people were heart-whole with the French. The siege of Paris further fired English feeling, and Kitchener was one of a number of young Englishmen who, offering their military services to the Republic, were appointed to the "Second Army" of the Loire, commanded by General Chanzy and largely composed of the Reserves, or *Gardes Mobiles*.[1]

Kitchener in after life spoke little of his time with the French Army, but what little he did say showed that, besides receiving his genuine Baptism of Fire, he assimilated much food for reflection as to military organisation—or the lack of it. His companion, young Henry Dawson—later Sir Henry Dawson—joined Kitchener at Dinan, and Colonel Kitchener confided the pair to the care of a Staff Officer, who took them with him to the Front.

Dawson wrote from "Laval, Headquarters of General Chanzy, January 27":

> Yesterday, as we were busy searching for some means of getting to the Front, Colonel Kitchener found a Staff Officer who was going to join the Army and could take us with him. We met the officer in the diligence and arrived at Rennes last night. This morning we came on to Laval, the train crammed with soldiers, and there were several officers

1 It is an accepted tradition in France that he enlisted as a private in the 6th Battalion of the Reserves belonging to the Department of the Côtes du Nord.

in our compartment. They were very polite and civil to us. . . . The Staff Officer will meet us to-morrow. Chanzy has, I hear, 240,000 men, though he lost no fewer than 30,000 in the fighting before and retreat from Le Mans. . . . We expect the sound of cannon at any moment. There are several English officers here. We are going to call on a Colonel Gordon, who seems to be a great swell, in hopes of getting some help from him. The difficulty is to get horses.

Laval was the farthest point to which the friends penetrated; and here Kitchener, while ballooning with a French officer, caught a chill which turned to pleurisy and pneumonia. His father found him critically ill at a cabaret in a village which the troops had quitted as insanitary, and brought him to England as soon as he was able to stand the journey. This early illness told for some time on the young man's physique and nerves; a year later a brother officer at Chatham was writing: "His experiences in France nearly killed him. He suffered a great deal of pain, and his one fear was that he would never have the strength to be a soldier."

The two young Englishmen's share of actual fighting was limited.[1] But more than twoscore years later the generous French people counted it for

1 Kitchener's soldiering in France was the subject of many legends, especially among his Woolwich contemporaries. The story of his having a commission in the French Artillery may have been based on the fact that another ex-Woolwich cadet received that distinction. Dawson wrote home: "This Army has not fought half as badly as the English Press makes out. They want officers most; I was offered a commission as Captain of Artillery"—a distinction from which his companion's sudden illness debarred him. The widespread tale of Kitchener's having been "shut up in Paris"—"during the Commune," as one version had it—"after getting his Commission in the Sappers," according to another variant—rested on no foundation of fact. Neither is it true that he accompanied Chanzy "all through the disastrous retreat from Le Mans." The retreat into Brittany was over by the time Kitchener joined the Army of the Loire.

righteousness to England's War Minister that in his youth he had risked his life, as in the end he devoted his finest efforts, to avenge the honour of France, and liberate her soil from the invader. In 1913 the French Republic conferred on him the War Medal commemorative of the campaign in which he had taken part, the *brevet* being covered by a graceful letter which perhaps no War Minister other than a Frenchman could write:

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE—MINISTERE DE LA GUERRE,
CABINET DU MINISTRE, PARIS, *le* 29 *Mars* 1913.

MONSIEUR LE MARÉCHAL—J'ai l'honneur d'adresser à Votre Excellence le brevet ci-joint de la Médaille commémorative de la campagne de 1870–1871, pour faire suite à l'envoi de l'insigne que vous avez reçu, comme témoignage de la haute estime du Gouvernement de la République.

Ce brevet vous rappellera votre première campagne de guerre. La France reconnaissante n'a pas oublié le cadet de Woolwich qui, aux heures tristes de son histoire, n'a pas hésité à lui offrir ses services et à combattre sous son drapeau.

Veuillez agrées, Monsieur le Maréchal, l'assurance de mes sentiments de haute considération.

Le Ministre de la Guerre,
EUG. CHESNEVOY.

Lord Kitchener, Maréchal de l'Armée anglaise.

The end of the story is that Kitchener on his return to England found his alleged breach of military discipline[1] had been taken seriously, and he was told to report himself at the Horse Guards. Brought into the presence of the Duke of Cambridge, he was

1 He would always maintain that he was free then to dispose of his time in France, where his home was situated. He had ceased to be a cadet and was not yet a Commissioned Officer, and was therefore not amenable to military discipline.

severely scolded, informed that he had behaved abominably, and threatened with the forfeiture of his status and the refusal of a commission. The Commander-in-Chief having administered this fierce rebuke paused a moment, and then murmured, "I am bound to say that in your place I should have done the same thing."

The peccant—and impenitent—Woolwich ex-cadet received his commission in the Corps of Royal Engineers early in April 1871, and immediately joined the School of Military Engineering at Chatham. Both there and later at Aldershot, where he gained his only experience of regimental life, he delighted in the technical side of his work. Then and all through his life he was eager to grapple with engineering and building problems, large or small. Nothing failed to interest him in this respect, from the great Dam at Assuan down to a door in the home he created in his last years, where happy hours were spent with his architect and friend, Mr. Blow, and various craftsmen.

At Chatham he struck up a friendship with a senior officer, Captain (afterwards Colonel) H. R. Williams, Assistant Field-work Instructor at the School of Military Engineering. The acquaintance began by Williams's applying for rooms occupied by Kitchener and another subaltern, who received notice to quit. Williams noted in his diary that he was in his office when "a very tall and very slight youth burst into the room and blurted out, 'My name is Kitchener, and I am ordered to move out of my little room because you want it. I know you would not wish such a thing, Sir.' He was looking terribly ill,

and his evident distress, coupled with a nice persuasive manner, caused me to offer him one of my two rooms. In a week we understood one another, took our daily exercise in company, sat next each other at mess, went to evensong together, became inseparable."

Williams [1] was an ardent High Churchman, and the influence of the elder man found a quick response in the younger, who threw himself into Church life and work, and after whose death Williams wrote:

> He was a practical and practising Churchman always,[2] and at Chatham habitually observed fast and festival—the former none too easy a matter in a military mess. He would whisper to me as we sat next to one another, "This is a fast day; we must get hold of something we don't like." . . . I am sure his real attitude towards the Church knew no change.

In 1873 Kitchener was asked to accompany the General Officer selected to attend the manœuvres in Austria. On arrival at Vienna the representative of the British Army was taken ill, and his aide-de-camp had to take his place, draft his report, receive the assiduous attention intended for him, and find himself on more than one occasion seated at dinner next the Emperor, who gave him every facility for seeing, not only the showy operations, but some military engineering work, which was more to his taste. There-

1 When Kitchener was in the East he would send his friend gifts—flowers from Gethsemane, olive branches from Mount Olivet, a carved olive-wood crucifix, and an earthenware lamp three thousand years old, and later, "a rose cut from Gordon's garden" at Khartum.

2 Kitchener never allowed the school of thought in the Church to which he was early attached to restrict in any degree his sympathies. When, as Secretary-for-War, he constituted the Church of England Advisory Committee on Chaplains, he specially enjoined on the chairman: "Take care that there is a real Evangelical among your members."

after Francis Joseph watched his career very closely, and repeatedly—though vainly—invited him to come to Vienna on his way to or from Egypt.

Kitchener hurried back to Chatham to finish a report on bridging which he had broken off to go abroad, but to which he assured Williams—who had reproached him for interrupting his work—he was able to contribute some valuable points he had picked up on the Danube.

At Aldershot, a place he seldom revisited, he was posted to a mounted troop of the Royal Engineers and had to apply himself to Field Telegraphy, then in its infancy. He was still noted as a very hard worker, very careful of his men and horses, and he seems to have combined proficiency in tent-pegging with fresh Church activities:

> We were very happy [wrote Williams] in a never-to-be-forgotten brotherhood of keen Churchmanship brought to high pressure under a remarkable man, Dr. Edgehill, later Chaplain-General. We tried to make a spacious "tin tabernacle" better fitted for Church worship, with an enlarged Altar and seemly surroundings, an organ, and a choir. The original congregation of 30 quickly grew to one of 800 assembled inside, with another hundred or two waiting outside. Officers and men were equally enthusiastic, and a sung Eucharist was well attended; and there was just enough persecution to keep us all at white heat.

"Persecution" was perhaps not the smallest of the inducements which drew and retained the young soldier just then within a special school of Churchmanship. Public feeling was at this time running high on a controversy about the externals of divine worship. Litigation had been followed by drastic

repressive legislation. The harsh treatment suffered by a section of the clergy—men of the type of Stanton and Dolling—was calculated to arouse the sympathy of young enthusiasts, and Kitchener in 1874—the year in which the passing of the Public Worship Regulation Act precipitated a Church crisis—joined the English Church Union, the rallying point of a determined defence movement.[1]

That summer he spent a short spell of leave in Hanover, to brush up his knowledge of the German tongue, and there came to him while thus engaged the first call from the East. Two months later he was gazetted off the strength of the "C" Telegraph Troop, his services being lent to the Palestine Exploration Expedition.

1 On January 1, 1876, after his first visit to Palestine, he was enrolled in the Army Guild of the Holy Standard, of which he remained a member to the end of his life.

CHAPTER III

In June 1865 had been established the Palestine Exploration Fund—the last of three kindred organisations, of which the first, founded in 1804, was dissolved thirty years later; and the second, dating from 1840, is represented by the still existing Society of Biblical Archaeology. The foundation-work of the new venture was the great Survey of Palestine —a necessary preliminary to the later labours of the historian and the archaeologist, the geologist and the mineralogist, the naturalist and the ethnologist, the photographer and the excavator, each and all of whom owe much to the skill and enthusiasm of officers of the Royal Engineers. Colonel Wilson[1] in 1864 explored and mapped out Jerusalem, and later made a survey of parts of Palestine and the Sinai Peninsula; Colonel Warren between 1867 and 1870 carried out important excavations in the Holy City. With the arrival in 1872 of another Royal Engineer, Lieutenant Conder, there began a minute and thorough Survey of the whole of Palestine, and in June 1874, on a vacancy occurring in his party, he at once suggested that his friend and brother officer should fill it. Kitchener, who already found the barrack square too circumscribed for his outlook and energy, jumped at the opportunity and hurried to see

1 Later Major-General Sir C. W. Wilson, and sometime Chairman of the Palestine Exploration Fund; and Major-General Sir Charles Warren.

Mr. Harper,[1] a leading promoter of the Fund, who told Walter Besant, the Secretary, that he "had found the very man they wanted." The military authorities were amenable, and by mid-November Kitchener had set foot for the first time on those Eastern shores where so large a part of his life-work was to lie. He scarcely thought then—though the thought would not have dismayed him—that for nearly forty years before the Great War he would not see an English Christmas. His delight in his new work was immediate and intense. He had shaken off the dust of drab routine and felt all the glow of being on special service. He had already studied Arabic and was soon quite fluent in it. His sympathies with his surroundings were quickly aroused. Colour of country and character of people alike appealed to him. And his association with Conder was, as he often admitted, no less helpful than delightful. His instinctive interest in antiquity was quickened by contact with his companion's wide learning and archaeological experience, even if he did not endorse his—sometimes too ingenious—suggestions for identifying Bible localities. Orientalists who were unable to accept all Conder's theories—such as the celebrated thesis, in which he anticipated Naville, that the Pentateuch was composed in cuneiform—admired their originality and conceded the merits of their author as a scholar and a savant.

The Survey, during Kitchener's first six months in Palestine, was carried on in the south—in the Wilderness of Judaea and Philistia. Early in the new year

1 Eighteen years later Kitchener was standing on the steps of Shepheard's Hotel at Cairo, and, seeing Harper, introduced him to some members of his Staff—"This is the man who put my foot on the first rung of the ladder" (Lady Harper's Diary).

he had his first experience of fever, which caused him to tarry in Jerusalem, and indeed nearly compelled Conder to send him back to England.[1] But by the middle of March he was back at his work, and a week or two later rescued his leader from drowning when bathing in the Mediterranean at Ascalon.

Kitchener was soon afterwards to save Conder's life for the second time, when the Survey party, after three years and a half of unmolested work, was on July 10 the subject of an outrage at Safed, a hotbed of Moslem fanaticism, in the high mountains of Upper Galilee. The Camp had just been laid out when a Sheikh stalked into it, insolently tried to examine Conder's effects, threw things about, and proceeded to assault a faithful servant who ventured to protest. The master coming to the rescue, the intruder then turned furiously on him and seized him by the throat. Conder, however, knocked him down, pushing out a couple of his teeth in the process, when there appeared a mob of yelling fanatics with a few shot-guns and a large assortment of stones. The former were harmlessly fired, but a fusillade of the latter was serious, and Kitchener was badly bruised. The two British officers were attacked by separate mobs; Conder was clubbed on the head—a blow from which he never fully recovered—and wounded in the neck. A third savage blow was parried by Kitchener—who while fighting his way to Conder had been barely missed by a bellowing negro with a scimitar—and the pair of officers proceeded to put in some useful work with their steel-headed whip handles:

1 The story is told that at the height of his fever he insisted on drinking some light beer, and that next morning the fever had left him.

I must inevitably [wrote Conder] have been murdered, but for the cool and prompt assistance of Lieutenant Kitchener, who managed to get to me and engaged one of the club men, covering my retreat. A blow descending on the top of his head he parried with his cane, which was broken by the force of the blow. A second wounded his arm. His escape is unaccountable. Having retired a few paces from the thick of the fray, I saw that the Moslems were gradually surrounding us, stealing behind trees and through vineyards; and I well understood that in such a case unless the soldiers arrived at once we must all die. Many of the servants had indeed already given up hope, though no one fled. I gave the order to leave the tents and fly round the hill. Lieutenant Kitchener was the last to obey this order, being engaged single-handed in front. When retreating to his tent he was fired at and heard the bullet whistle by his head.

The arrival of the soldiers put an end to what was nearly a fatal fray, but Conder was so injured as to be obliged to hand over his half-finished report to his second-in-command, who wrote from Mount Carmel:

Being placed in command of the Expedition owing to the temporary illness of Lieutenant Conder, I write by his wish to inform the Committee that the Survey is at present entirely suspended in consequence of two causes—the first being a murderous and unprovoked attack on the party by Moslem inhabitants of Safed (particulars enclosed); the second, the gradual spread of cholera over the north of Palestine. Lieutenant Conder and myself consider in these circumstances that we cannot take the responsibility of conducting the party again into the field until a very severe punishment has been awarded to the inhabitants of Safed and until the steady advance of the cholera is checked. I feel certain that neither of these obstacles will be removed under two or three months.

The Survey had of course to be suspended, as the cholera raged and justice dawdled. The latter, however, was eventually secured, the ringleaders of the Safed assault being sentenced to various terms of imprisonment and their town fined £270, which was very appropriately handed over to the Palestine Exploration Fund.

On October 1 Conder and Kitchener left Palestine for England. Both were weak with fever—Kitchener the worse sufferer; but he insisted on making the forty-mile ride from Haifa to Jaffa in a single day, and at the end of it was so exhausted that he rolled off his horse on to the sand. Conder wrote: "Leaving him on the edge of the orange gardens I galloped off to bring assistance and returned to find him gone. My anxiety was not, however, of long duration, for he had crept through the garden, and I soon found him in bed in the hotel."

A short holiday granted by the Fund facilitated the preparation and production of *Lieutenant Kitchener's Guinea Book of Photographs of Biblical Sites*—a selection of twelve from the total number of fifty which he had originally intended to publish. "My principal object," he said in the Preface, "has been to secure a fresh view of many of the most interesting Biblical sites, and, in as many cases as possible, to present entirely new scenery to the public." Kitchener insisted that the purchasers of his maiden literary effort should get better value for their guinea than a dozen photographs, and protested against Besant's proposal that only twelve out of his fifty pictures should be included in the first volume and the others reserved for a second. He disliked the idea of a second volume: "People won't buy

twice." Where was the advantage of having a publisher at all? The printing and mounting being finished, "all you want are a cheap binder and a few advertisements to announce that the book can be got at the office of the Fund." By giving good value "you sell a great many more," besides saving the publisher's "enormous commission." The binding should be "something cheap and pretty. . . . I write without experience of publishers; I am sure you will do the best you can."

He took his book very seriously, and from his father's house at Dinan peppered Besant with directions and suggestions:

> Herewith the MS. I have got so pleased with it by constant perusal that I should not care for much alteration; but of course, if necessary, cut and slash away as much as you like. . . . Write to me about your interview with the publisher. Do stick out for a nicely-designed strong binding. I feel the fever of an author, or rather perhaps authoress, at the production of a first-born. I shall be in town in January [1876] and must start on February 1 for Palestine at all hazards. Europe is not worth living in.

Either his enthusiasm for his book, or his friend Besant's rather fussy suggestions, or a recurrence of fever, or a combination of all three, must have rendered the young author a little fractious:

> You do not give me the slightest reason for the sudden change you have decided upon. . . .
>
> I am utterly disheartened and disgusted. Ever since sending off the MS. I have been down with fever, and your letter is not one to set me right again. I am the servant of the Committee, and will do my best; but I am weak and

seedy now, and I don't think "my best" will be any great shakes just at present.

Besant replied soothingly, and received a handsome apology:

DINAN, *December* 22, 1875.

I was very glad to get your letter. I am sure, now you have started the book, that it will be well done. You know, I daresay, what it is to be seedy and cross, and I was very much of both when I last wrote. I shall be over for work either the first, or beginning of the second, week in January.

CHAPTER IV

KITCHENER's return to Palestine was, after all, postponed for a twelvemonth, and through 1876 he and Conder[1] were in London preparing the great Map of Palestine in twenty-six sheets. He was, however, all impatient to get back to the East, and in December wrote to Besant:

ASPALL HALL, DEBENHAM,
December 20, 1876.

Dixon last night seemed somewhat doubtful about my starting on the 2nd. I hope you will impress on any members the importance of my going to Constantinople, and that if I go I must start on the 2nd; otherwise I shall not get round in time.

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1 Kitchener wrote just then to Miss Conder, his friend's sister:

"44 PHILLIMORE GARDENS,
"*October* 27, 1875.

"MY DEAR MISS CONDER—I send you some information about the vestments of the Church of England that you wished to have. The proper vestments for the celebration of the Holy Communion are 7. 1. The Alb with Girdle; this is a white dress with tight sleeves and a girdle round the waist. 2. The Stole you know. 3. The Chasuble or vestment which is put over the priest's head and falls in front and behind; it used to be much fuller than now. 4. The Cope, which is worn over the surplice like a cloak in processions and vespers, very gorgeous and has a hood attached. 5. The Maniple you know. 6. The Dalmatic and Alb for the Gospeller. 7. The Alb and Tunicle for the Epistoler. The Dalmatic and Tunicle should be the same colour as the Chasuble, loose with large sleeves. The Tunicle is smaller and similar.

"These are the principal vestments used in the Church of England; of course they all have meanings.

"Ask your father if he knows what windows represent in a church: the answer is Holy Scripture, for they let in light and keep out all that is harmful.

"I must now end this popish letter. With kind remembrances to all."

The Survey was resumed early in 1877 under Kitchener's direction.[1] At Beirut, where he arrived on February 6, his official reception was "very civil," and Northern Palestine, pending the outbreak of the war with Russia, was "comparatively tranquil," though he wrote from Tiberias a month later that "the Druses are giving a good deal of trouble, cutting people's throats on the road to Damascus." In April the *amende* was made for the Safed outrage: "We rode into the town in quite a triumphal procession"; visits were exchanged with numerous high officials: "Everybody most civil and obliging. To-day I have seen the Governor, the British Consul, and our old enemy Ali Agha Alan, the cause of the row; the latter expressed deep sorrow for what he had done, as well he may, being all but ruined." At Kitchener's intercession the last £60 of his fine was remitted.

His Reports were lucid, graphic, and precise, without any pretension to literary merit; they show a mind cleared for action and a sense of responsibility willingly incurred. Writing from Tiberias[2] he dwells on the physical characteristics of the country, such as "the five extinct volcanoes" whose rejected *débris* has fertilised the plain; he is explicit on points of military history and elaborates with military touches "the last great fight" of the Crusaders; he

1 Conder, disabled from active work, was busy at home with the Map and elaborate memoranda, the latter a joint and gratuitous service to the Fund.

2 A distinguished French archaeologist, Clermont Ganneau, met Kitchener in Palestine. He described him as tall, slim, and vigorous; capable of headstrong acts: "a frank and most outspoken character, with recesses of winsome freshness. His high spirits and cheeriness were in agreeable contrast to the serious, grave characters of some of his comrades. His predecessor, Conder, for instance, was of a much sadder disposition. Kitchener's ardour for his work astonished us." He spoke also of his "marked proficiency" in archaeological research.

identifies ancient sites and describes architectural remains—mediaeval churches and fortifications; he discovers a very good specimen of a ruined synagogue, and examines the "celebrated caves whence Herod the Great dislodged robbers," though the place was "an almost impregnable fortress"; and from the prehistoric period, with "the first perfect dolmen I have seen in this country," he comes down to date with a prosaic and business-like account of the water-supply of the district. He is keenly alive —as indeed he always was—to the beauties of the country, which "is now very lovely, carpeted with flowers and green with the growing crops." He discusses the existing system of Turkish military service, and the drawbacks it imposes on agriculture; and he winds up by reiterating his appeal for the appointment at Haifa of a British Consul whose influence would not only be "of the greatest benefit to all the Christians of the district," but would also give protection to "a thriving English Mission and schools at Nazareth," as well as to "many English subjects amongst the Jews," and to the considerable English shipping trade. The Report reads less like that of a Survey Officer than of a very wide-awake diplomatic agent casting an administrative eye over the country, its people, its buildings, its history, its prospects.[1]

Other Reports show his thirst for detail and his

1 A well-known Jewish writer, Dr. Daiches, has suggested that no other recorded period in the life of Kitchener gives a better insight into his disposition and his ways of work, or reveals to us his mind, heart, and character, so well as the four years which he spent in Palestine: "His indomitable energy, his unequalled thoroughness, his hunger for work, his mastery of detail, his preparedness, his economy in men and material, his making sure of success, his sense of duty, his ability to inspire others with zeal for work—all these are characteristics of the Kitchener of a later time."

determination—literally—to leave no stone unturned in his task of discovery. A certain place-name, Kulmon or Kalamon, appeared only on a few maps. Having hunted for the name through the title-deeds of the local landowners—a German colony—Kitchener betook himself to Tireh to catechise everybody:

> I asked every one I met on the road there and back—about twenty people—first, for all the names of the country round, and, as a last resource, if they had ever heard of "Kulmon," "Kalamon," or anything like it. At Khurbet Kefr-es-Samir I found an old man who inhabited a cave close by, and I put the same questions. At Tireh I saw the sheikh and about two dozen men; none had ever heard of such a name. Since then the Superior of the Convent of Mount Carmel, who knows the district most thoroughly, has assured me that no such name occurs. I can therefore only assume that the name does not exist, and that our Map is therefore right in not putting it on. How other maps have procured the name seems difficult to understand.

This part of the Survey was not unattended with difficulty. The supplies frequently ran short, the servants not infrequently ran away, and the sheikhs were not always amenable. At one village he writes: "The sheikh was extremely rude, and threw stones against an inscription when I attempted to copy it. I therefore left without doing so, and reported the matter to the Governor, who immediately put the sheikh into prison. The next time I went to the village there was no opposition to my copying the inscription; I therefore had the sheikh set at liberty."

When Turkey came to blows with Russia, the expedition was thought at home to be exposed to some

risk; fortunately the Engineer subaltern was not only on easy terms with the Ottoman authorities, but had already woven the web of a little intelligence department:

DIBL, 4.5.77.

I know you will be anxious [he told the Chairman of the Fund[1]] about the safety of the party now that war has been declared. As far as I know at present, there is no cause for the slightest alarm. I am on the best of terms with the Government, and the Pasha at Acca has more than once shown his anxiety that all should go well with us. The people here are quiet and orderly, and there is no fear but what they will remain so as long as the Government keeps a firm hold. In case of any change in that respect I should at once move to some place of safety, as I have no doubt it would be the signal for a rising. I shall hear from many sources if anything of the kind occurs.

The Survey of the North of Palestine was completed on July 10. It covered 1000 square miles of country; during a single month the extent of country surveyed had been 350 square miles, 2773 place-names were collected, and 476 ruins were mentioned —some with special plans. At every village a record was compiled of the number and religion of the inhabitants, remains of ancient buildings, character of the neighbourhood, and nature of the water-supply. Special notes were made of the geology and archaeology of the country, and photographs were taken of the more important sites.

The Reports were supplemented by a copious Journal of a more personal character and in the looser form of a Diary. "All well, so far," and the northern Survey finished: "Phoenicia was the

[1] W. Hepworth Dixon, editor of the *Athenaeum*.

worst country we have surveyed yet—all up and down, and crowded with ruins and villages. Where 'Murray' has 7 names I had 116; instead of 7 villages and ruins I had 63." From Haifa on July 11 he writes that the work has been done at a cost below the original estimate—and "there has been no accident." The party are "now off to the Lebanon for a three weeks' rest," which they "sadly want." Yet in less than a fortnight he has already started office-work in a room close to the camp, and anticipates a month or more of hard work, "everything having to be made in duplicate." A week later: "We have been working from 6 to 6 to get done—Sundays included."

Jerusalem was reached on September 7—Kitchener's love of warmth, which marked him in after life, being tested on the way by a temperature at Nazareth [1] of 114° Fahr. in the shade. Before the end of September sextant and compass could be laid aside.

JERUSALEM, *October* 2.

I am sure you will be glad to hear that the Map is an accomplished fact, and six years' work has been finished. We wound up at Bir-es-Saba (Beersheba) on September 28—much quicker than I expected—though the work in the south was 340 square miles. The fact is we had to work hard; the water was so bad, being salt and the colour of weak tea, and our bread all went mouldy.

He surmises that the Azzazimeh Arabs are "the modern representatives of the Amalekites."

1 He wrote just then: "The Arabs show no great sympathy for their co-religionists at war; they hate the Turk, and do not much care which way the war goes." His last experience of the Arab hatred of the Turk was nearly forty years later, when the Sherif of Mecca—largely under his encouraging influence—threw off the Turkish yoke.

The country we have been in is inhabited only by Arabs, who have been at war amongst themselves for the last three years. They said no Europeans had ever been in this part of the country before, which I can believe from the very bad state of all existing maps of the district. . . . We got back here a week earlier than I had calculated upon. . . . Expenses were high among the Arabs, and I had a great deal of travelling, but I still keep on the right side of the estimate.

On this last point Kitchener was not only able to allay the rising fears of the Committee as to expenditure, but to prove himself £100 to the good.[1]

The Roman roads in Palestine, he reminded his employers, might have a useful future as well as a historic past:

Over a most difficult country such as this it excites admiration to see the way that difficulties were got over with the least possible expenditure of labour. Should Palestine ever be re-opened to civilisation, these roads will form the basis of the principal lines of communication through the country. . . . The people [at Amwas] were extremely civil and obliging, and though I had a Turkish soldier with me they expressed their longing that England would take the country and give them the benefits of a just Government. Nothing that I could say would induce them to believe that England had no intention of doing anything of the sort.

One of the few rebuffs Kitchener ever sustained even in early life was in an encounter with the Greek

[1] The Committee in their Statement for 1877 noted that the Map would be by far the most important contribution ever yet made to the knowledge of the lands of the Bible, and said that Kitchener had carried on the work for six months during a period of suspicion and excitement without any accidents: "His reports are careful and intelligent, and his monthly accounts show due regard to economy. He has hitherto managed to conduct the Survey for a monthly sum less than that which the Committee gave him."

Patriarch as to the repair and custody of Jacob's Well at Nablus (Shechem):

October 11.—I am in treaty with the Patriarch about Jacob's Well. If I build up the wall, repair the Well, etc., I want him to build a small lodge and undertake to keep a guardian to preserve the site. His Beatitude has referred the matter to the Synod, and will give me an answer in a few days.

October 15.—The Greek Patriarch has delayed me two days in negotiating about the Well. I saw him next morning early, and put it clearly before him that a refusal, after he had promised to allow the work, would cause a very bad impression in England. After considerable talk he promised to see the Synod again on the subject, and on Monday afternoon called upon me. I was unfortunately out revising; however, this morning, by his desire, I attended a service in the Holy Sepulchre Church, and afterwards saw him at the Patriarchate. . . . I was treated with the greatest civility. . . . He claimed that no work could be done without his permission. This I agreed to, but stipulated that, if I put a wall round the site and a gate, all Christians should have a right and facility of entrance. This was at once agreed to. He then said they had no money to build the chamber for the guardian, and that the key should be kept, till he could do so, at the Greek Convent at Nablus. I objected and said that in that case I would buy the gate but not put it up till the guardian's chamber was ready. At last we came to the decision that the key should be kept in the village close by, within a stone's throw, and that a notice in English of where it was to be procured should be put on the gate, and notice of any change given to the British Consul.

But a fortnight later he had to own to the failure of his efforts to have Jacob's Well mended and

minded, and that—insult being added to injury—he had been pelted and cursed in the streets of Nablus.

He had a chuckle, however, over his exposure of the fraudulent manufacture of "ancient Moabite" pottery idols at Jerusalem. The German "connoisseurs" had been taken in; they greedily swallowed the first specimens and asked for more! Doubts of the genuineness of the images had been repeated to Kitchener, who, moving warily in the matter, succeeded in locating the manufacturer and surprising him at his work, surrounded by specimens of his sinister skill.

Kitchener had made up his mind that before returning to England he would visit Constantinople; and when he had satiated himself with St. Sophia, he managed to see some of the fighting between the Russians and Turks near Adrianople, thus making his first acquaintance with the Turkish Army, in which he was afterwards, as Sirdar in Egypt, to hold a commission. The unit to which he attached himself was the division under Valentine Baker Pasha, but he wrote of the Turkish soldier generally as "enduring any hardship without a murmur," and as "always ready to fight, and never conquered except by overpowering numbers." The Bulgarians did not impress him favourably, nor did later events do much to alter his opinion. "They seem to be a most despicable race, and morally at the lowest ebb."[1]

The spring and summer of 1878 were spent at South Kensington in laying down the reduction of the Map; but the Foreign Office was making its first

[1] He contributed to *Blackwood's Magazine* for February 1878 an article entitled "A Visit to Sofia and the Heights of Kamerieh."

demand for Kitchener's services, and, although he still hoped to survey the country beyond Jordan, his work for the Fund had to be wound up as quickly as possible. Early in September he handed over to the Committee his contributions to their archives: (1) a completed Survey, on a 1-inch scale, of rather more than 6000 square miles, prepared for publication by the Ordnance Survey department; (2) twenty-six volumes of "Memoirs"—namely, twenty by Lieutenant Conder and six by himself, comprising the notes made by the Survey party while at work; (3) a reduced Map prepared by him for the engraver; (4) a number of his own photographs; (5) a number of special plans drawn by Lieutenant Conder and himself.

The Committee placed on record their "thanks to Lieutenants Conder and Kitchener for the skill and devotion displayed in the successful conduct of the Survey," and for the economy with which the latter had kept his expenses below the estimate.

Before taking over new duties, Kitchener in August gave an address at the Dublin meeting of the British Association on "The Survey of Galilee"—the only topographical lecture he ever delivered. He rather startled his audience by telling them he had collected 2770 names for the Map, where the best existing map showed only about 450, and gave them an inkling of his thoroughness in such minor matters as getting the names phonetically accurate:

> The nomenclature was written down in Arabic by a well-educated scribe kept for that purpose. Each surveyor had a guide with him, who gave him the names of the different places. The surveyor wrote them down as near as he could

to the sound, and on returning to camp he repeated them in front of the guide and the scribe. The guide then pronounced the names correctly, and the scribe wrote each down from him. I afterwards transliterated the Arabic in accordance with Robinson's method, and the proper spelling was thus obtained and was written on the Map.

Every possible check on the veracity of the natives was employed by asking numbers of people independently the names.

Dishonest guides were dismissed; and as these people are peculiarly susceptible to sarcasm, the offenders were not happy when they were laughed out of camp for not knowing their own country as well as we knew it.

He showed the same solicitude for preserving the ruins of the Capernaum Synagogue as for the repair of Jacob's Well. He announced rather sadly the planning of a new expedition in which he would have no part, explaining that "it is hoped to rescue from the hand of that ruthless destroyer, the uneducated Arab, one of the most interesting ruins in Palestine, hallowed by the footprints of our Lord. I allude to the Synagogue of Capernaum, which is rapidly disappearing owing to the stones being burnt for lime. Ought we not to preserve for ourselves and our children buildings so hallowed, so unique?"

The interest in Palestine was sustained to the last. Four years before his death he wrote to Dr. Blyth, Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem:

BRITISH AGENCY, CAIRO,
March 20, 1912.

MY DEAR BISHOP—Very many thanks for your kind letter. My brother's death was very sudden and I have felt it a good deal. I very much wish I could revisit Palestine, but fear for some time it will be out of the question, as I am

very tied here with work, and shall have to get home as quickly as possible when I get leave. I am glad to think that Church matters have been satisfactorily arranged at Khartum, and I know how obliged the Sirdar has been by your support and assistance. I think everything is working quietly and well here, and the Bishop of London's visit went off well and did good.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IV

Besides a short memorandum describing El Arbain, which Kitchener thought was indisputably the burial-place of the Maccabees,[1] his archaeological researches during four years resulted in several monographs. In an essay on "The Synagogues of Galilee," of which the number of known examples in Galilee is accepted as eleven, he refers to three other specimens of a doubtful character, and gives reasons for supposing one of them to be of much earlier date than the rest. Certain peculiarities about its site and design seem to exclude it from the synagogue category: "I am led to the supposition that we have here one of the most perfect and earliest specimens of a temple dedicated to some deity worshipped on this high place, and attended by a number of votaries lodged in the surrounding buildings." This conclusion would, he says, be reinforced if other pagan temples could be shown to have existed in the neighbourhood. Attention is therefore drawn parenthetically to some enormous monolithic double columns of red granite now lying in the ruins of Tyre cathedral. They are quite obviously part of some building earlier than the church, which is of white marble; they could not have belonged to a pre-existing synagogue, because the Jews would not have been able to import such large and costly monoliths from Egypt, the probable place of origin. The inference

1 If the tombs of the Maccabees were known to be here, there would be no violent improbability in the tradition of the transfer of their remains to Rome, and of their preservation under the high altar in the ancient church of San Pietro in Vincoli on the Esquiline.

is they are remains of a very early and magnificent pagan temple.

The eleven Galilee synagogues—to which may probably be added a couple more, at or near Tiberias—are shown to possess certain characteristics in common which indicate two important departures from Jewish custom—namely, the presence of carved figures of animals, and the arrangement by which the worshippers would have their backs turned to Jerusalem. Apparently they were all built nearly at the same time, and the Jewish influence in Galilee was not only entirely local but also very short-lived. Moreover, there was the striking fact that, while they differ vitally from the known form of the earlier synagogues, they are beyond question true synagogues, as is proved by "the Hebrew inscriptions and the sacred Jewish symbols carved on the lintels."

Kitchener's explanation is that, though designed for Jewish worship, these buildings were actually erected by non-Jewish hands. In the second century after Christ the Jews of Palestine, under State encouragement, formed a colony round Tiberias. The building of synagogues was probably aided by the Romans—*e.g.* by Antoninus Pius and Alexander Severus—and carried out by Roman labour, the Jews feeling obliged to accept what the heathen Government offered. But as soon as they were able—after Julian's abortive attempt to rebuild their Temple, and the weakening of the tie between them and the civil power—the Jews deserted these pagan-built synagogues as involving disloyalty to their religion. The date Kitchener suggests for their erection is between A.D. 150 and 300. A woodcut by H. W. Brewer, after a photograph by Kitchener, shows the finely ornamented doorway of the ancient synagogue then just discovered at Sufsaf.

In 1879 appeared a note in reassertion of his identification of Chorazin with Keraseh, of Bethsaida and Bethsaida Julias with Tell Hum, and of Capernaum with Khurbet Minieh. As to Chorazin the experts were not unanimous,

but the controversy was waged chiefly around the question of Capernaum, which Thomson, Hepworth Dixon, Wilson, Schürer, and other placed at Tell Hum. Tell Hum marks a place of importance, and in particular includes the ruins of a large synagogue, identified by some with that built by the noble heathen centurion of Luke vii. 1–10. Kitchener, following MacGregor, Porter, and Conder, contended that Tell Hum represents, not Capernaum, but the two Bethsaidas. The date he had already assigned to Galilean synagogues would exclude the possibility of the Tell Hum synagogue being the centurion's gift. Capernaum, he held, could hardly have been more than just a village built of mud, with a guard-house for soldiers and a custom-house whence Matthew was called (Matt. ix. 9), and he identifies it with Khurbet Minieh. The Bethsaidas admittedly formed an important city, and this, he argues, must be looked for at Tell Hum. In further support of this view, he cited an account by Josephus of certain military operations—an entirely novel line of argument.

CHAPTER V

In the autumn of 1878, under the Treaty of Berlin, Great Britain assumed the protectorate of Cyprus, with Sir Garnet Wolseley as British High Commissioner, and Kitchener was borrowed by the Foreign Office and instructed to make a Survey of the Island.

With a party of Royal Engineers he reached Cyprus in September, and submitted to Wolseley his proposals for a Survey on orthodox lines; the High Commissioner saw no necessity for so thorough a geographical Survey based on an elaborate triangulation, and gave orders for the completion of a number of village surveys to be pieced together for the composition of the Map. Kitchener's professional scruples prompted a respectful protest, which only provoked a stern rejoinder that the Map was to be drawn according to orders. The subaltern, sat upon but unsatisfied, appealed to the Foreign Office —whence his mandate had come—with the result that Lord Salisbury—then Foreign Minister—desired the Survey to be carried out on the model of the trigonometrical Ordnance Survey in England. Within a few months, however, the dwindling revenue of the Island imposed strict economy, and the High Commissioner recommended that the Survey—as a luxury—should be discontinued.

A return to routine was no pleasing prospect. It so happened that Sir Charles Wilson had just been appointed British Consul-General in Asia Minor to execute the local reforms prescribed under the Anglo-Turkish Convention, and learning that Kitchener was disponible he secured him as Military Vice-Consul [1] at Kastamuni. His special duty was to investigate the condition of the people, and his reports furnished serious and sorry reading. Some wretched refugees appealed to him: "They have nothing to eat; their children cry for food, and they have nothing to give them; they live on vegetables, but very shortly there will be no more to be had. They have no houses, and sleep under trees." He demands that the Turkish Government shall take action "for the safety of the district, and prevent these people from dying of want." He has had complaints from both Mohammedans and Christians of outrages and even murders committed by Circassians, and demands that some of the worst cases should be "severely dealt with." He exposes the maladministration of justice, the bribery rampant in the law-courts, and the incapacity of the inspector sent to "introduce some order" into them. He urges that a superior Turkish official with full power and a force of regular troops be sent to this district without loss of time.

In February 1880 the British Ambassador, Sir Austen Layard, transmitted to Lord Salisbury Kitchener's views on the general administration of the vilayet of Kastamuni—a damning indictment of Turkish misrule. It is one long story of Governors armed with no powers and afraid of offending subor-

[1] August 1879.

dinates who on petition can secure their dismissal; of officials who obey only such orders from above as they choose; of orders flouted; of unpunished and unchecked peculation and misappropriation of Government money; of shameless extortion, bribery, and blackmail—for many officials the only means of livelihood; of Government accounts habitually "cooked"; of religious influence constantly abused; of "reforms" which destroy much and construct nothing. Candidates for Government posts compete in examinations, but are selected by favour. Petitions against ill-treatment by officials are barred by monstrous preliminary fees, and complaints against ill-treatment by brigands are checked by the fear of their retaliation when they shall have squared the police to let them go. No reforms in the Finance, Police, Prisons, Education, and Public Works Departments, declared Kitchener, have yet been taken in hand.

Lord Salisbury asked Sir Austen "to convey to Mr. Kitchener my thanks for the information contained in this document, which I have read with much interest." The Turkish Government, however, did not bestir itself, and Wilson in April had to tell the Ambassador that "nothing had been done since Kitchener's visit to mitigate the sufferings of the people."

But Cyprus, now under a new High Commissioner, Colonel Biddulph, was pressing for an accurate Survey on which to base a measure of land registration, and the choice of Survey Director again fell on Kitchener. He wrote to Besant from Nicosia (29.3.80):

Here I am back at my old work of surveying. I think

I was wrong giving up the diplomatic line, but I could not let another pull my points about here, so when the General offered it me again I could not well refuse, as he put in increased pay and better position. I have now been gazetted Director of the Survey, and hope soon to get my men out again. I enjoyed Anatolia immensely—such lovely country! I met Wilson at Marsivan looking awfully well. He moves about in great state and is well received everywhere. He showed me some copies of the proofs of the Memoir. How about the Map? I have just received your Memo.—should much like to have a run up to Constantinople to present it to the old Sultan, with a little description in my best Turkish (no small accomplishment now!) to tell him what it is, why it was done, who did it, and *how* glad he ought to be to get it—and with some hints of a firman for increased powers of excavation at Jerusalem or the survey of the Hauran. A flourish afterwards by the *Times* correspondent, whom I know, and a letter from Laurence Oliphant will start the whole thing again in grand style! You never write to me; can't you? I want to hear how the whole business is going on, and to know why I never get the *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly;* don't I subscribe all right? I rather expect to do some excavations here for the British Museum. I hope the Ministry are safe, for the sake of the East. Dizzy is a great hand at Eastern policy, and if left to play his game will win the odd trick. But it is a difficult hand to play, and the "Libs." would entirely ruin the whole, probably playing into the hands of Russia by forming a Young Armenia. I should be much obliged if you would put in the *Athenaeum* that I have returned to my old haunts. The north was too cold—snow over the telegraph posts—Yours ever,

H. H. KITCHENER.

Write me a line like a good man!—H. K.

In another letter to Besant from Nicosia (6.6.80) he speaks again of a survey of the Hauran:

I think you are on the right road; the other side Jordan must be surveyed, and if Laurence Oliphant's scheme comes to anything money ought to be forthcoming. I had a long "jaw" with L. O. at Constantinople. When the time comes, I hope I may be your man. I have a tremendous longing to go and do "the other side." I was at Damascus the other day; the country is quite quiet. You say nothing of giving the Map to the Sultan. Let us know what has been done. Do you know I am a subscriber and never get the *P. E. F. Quarterly?* Has it ceased to exist? I have been sorely delayed in this Cypriote Map, and shall not get fairly started for another month. I should like awfully to see my old friends the Bedawin again. Remember, I had to work at a great pace, owing to the war, when finishing the northern parts. Remember me to Warren.

To a skilled surveyor much of the Island offered considerable facilities. The great central plain afforded an excellent base-line for a satisfactory triangulation to the serrated peaks of the northern range of steep limestone mountains,[1] which on one side slope away in the long and narrow peninsula of the Karpas, and on the other connect with the huge volcanic shoulders of Mt. Machera and Mt. Troödos (6600 feet).

One part of the Island, however, offered peculiar obstacles. The south-western spur running down from Mt. Troödos to Khrysokhou and Papho was not only unexplored, but presented a labyrinth of excessively steep, crumbled, and twisted ridges and valleys —pathless, shapeless, and in outline almost identical. There were other difficulties—the Cypriotes' ignorange of any language but Greek or Turkish, the want of roads, the trying climate, and the prejudices

1 Kitchener built cairns on many of the mountain peaks for survey purposes.

and occasional hostility of the islanders, Kitchener himself being shot at on more than one occasion.[1]

But between the autumn of 1879 and the end of 1882 the Map of the Island was completed,[2] and some 3500 square miles accurately and minutely delineated, much of the detail being drawn by Lieut. S. G. Grant, R.E., who was appointed in 1881 to assist Kitchener. The completed Map—on a scale of one inch to the mile—was pronounced a very finished specimen of the art of Cartography. To his original functions was superadded the control of the Land Registration, a delicate duty in a country where there are few boundaries and many lawsuits. He succeeded, however, in so remodelling the system as to give satisfaction generally, and notably in his determined efforts to extricate the Cypriotes from the too frequent and firm grip of the money-lenders. In this department he was brought much more into contact with the High Commissioner himself, a very able administrator, with whose rapidity of thought and expression Kitchener said he sometimes found it difficult to keep pace—"I know the answers to his

1 "Information was received in Limassol yesterday evening to the effect that Lieutenant Kitchener, R.E., Director of Survey, had been shot at near the village of Pissouri. It appears that, seeing a man near where he was at work, Mr. Kitchener approached him to ask for some information, when the man levelled a gun at him, and kept moving about still keeping the gun in a threatening position. Mr. Kitchener then went some distance to fetch a native to interpret for him, and on returning to the spot the man again levelled his piece, and eventually fired a shot at Mr. Kitchener, but fortunately without hitting him. The native with him bolted and Mr. Kitchener was unable to capture the miscreant" (*Cyprus Herald*, 7.2.81). For some extracts from newspapers the author is indebted to the excellent record of *Kitchener in his own Words*, by Mr. Rye and Mr. Groser.

2 Sir Samuel Baker wrote: "Mr. Kitchener, Lieutenant of the R.E., called at our camp [near Kytherea] and was kind enough to pilot us to the celebrated spring about three miles above the village. This able and energetic officer was engaged with Mr. Hipperley of the same corps in making a trigonometrical survey of the Island, and they were quartered in a comfortable house in the outskirts of the town."

questions, but he's so quick that I can't always think of them."

Kitchener was described just then by a companion as "very slight in figure and spare for his height—about 6 ft. 1 in. The thick brown hair was parted in the middle; clear blue eyes under heavy brows looked straight and full at you; a shapely moustache concealed the upper lip, while the upright figure and square shoulders gave an impression of vigour and alertness which was not belied by a manner decidedly shy and reserved."

Always a good horseman, he used to act as whip to a pack of hounds and distinguished himself "across the sticks," when, on an Arab mare which he had brought from Syria and trained himself, he won the steeplechase at the Nicosia [1] meeting in 1882. The cup which he carried off was a treasured trophy seldom absent from his dinner-table in Calcutta, Cairo, or London.

In Cyprus he began to indulge an appetite, which never forsook him, for collecting porcelain and other art treasures, his first find being a richly carved old oak door and frame, from which he fashioned a side-board.[2] Lack of experience and reliance on eye rather than knowledge led him into some errors, but

1 A friend wrote from Cyprus how at Nicosia he "set up house with a high-spirited, horse-loving, dare-devil boy, Lord John Kennedy, an officer of the Cyprus Police, who kept a bear cub as a pet in the house. One hot evening, when Kitchener's bath had been prepared, the bear took it into his head to have first plunge, and then retired to the bed to dry himself! After that he was banished!"

Kitchener's room in Nicosia was kept as far as possible in the state in which it had been while he occupied it, the owner, a Greek, declaring his belief that the young English officer would one day be a very great man.

2 Lord Kitchener was a good craftsman at fine cabinet work. One of the last relaxations of his life was the repair and restoration to its original condition of an ebony cabinet of seventeenth-century Italian design and workmanship.

from the first he always knew what he wanted; he never bought or bartered for the mere sake of possessing, and his later knowledge, wide experience, and innate good taste enabled him to acquire a collection of considerable value. In his early ardour he promoted an Arts and Crafts Show at Nicosia—a somewhat thankless effort, as the natives believed that anything they brought might be taken from them at the whim of the Government. But the existing Cyprus Museum must be regarded as his creation, and before he left the Island he had formed the nucleus of a collection [1] which he induced some of the officials and influential natives to endow, and for which he squeezed a small Government grant. He also transmitted to the Science and Art Department at South Kensington what they described as "the very interesting reports on the excavations made under your direction at Gastrica and Curium" which "will be submitted to the Lords of the Committee of Council on Education."

Kitchener was somewhat flattered just now to receive an invitation from the British Museum to undertake the superintendence of excavations in Assyria, a tempting but scarcely practical offer:

I should like very much [he wrote] to undertake the work, but I am at present Director of Survey of Cyprus, drawing £672 a year, and I feel that I could hardly relinquish that appointment without some definite salary being settled by the British Museum. I should also like to know what sum of money would be expended by the British Museum yearly on excavations in Assyria. If the Foreign

1 The ancient Cypriote glass in the museum had been pronounced among the finest in existence.

Office could be induced to increase the importance and pay of the British Consul at Mosul, and would allow the superintendent of the excavations to hold it, I think it would be an advantage for the work, and I have no doubt I should then be able to accept it.

But Lord Salisbury was not to be cajoled into any combination of the Mosul Consulate with the superintendence of the Nineveh excavation work, and the matter dropped.[1]

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER V

Kitchener left Cyprus at the beginning of 1883; two years later, in a Memorandum, he referred to the conditions of the Island under British rule:—

Cyprus was handed over to Great Britain by Turkey in a thoroughly exhausted and ruined condition. The system for centuries had been to take as much as possible out of the Island, giving nothing in return. All public works and every institution in the Island were in the last stage of decay. English administration laboured under the enormous difficulty that there was no foundation to work upon. Every department was in the same rotten state, and reconstruction had to be begun from the lowest steps.

We may now look with some satisfaction and pride on the results of the English administration of Cyprus during the last seven years. A constantly increasing revenue, which last year gave a surplus over expenditure of the large sum of £82,366, shows the steady growth of wealth in the Island; and when we find that, notwithstanding some remissions, the customs duties have since the British occupation increased more than 350 per cent, we can form some idea

1 "They very much regret that your engagements prevent your undertaking the superintendence of the excavations in Assyria and Babylonia" (Trustees of the British Museum to Kitchener, 17.3.81).

how the prosperity of an emancipated people can expand under an enlightened form of government.

Every department of government has been thoroughly reorganised, and it only requires a glance at the map to see that money has been liberally expended on much-needed roads, bridges, piers, etc. Doubtless some result is already being reaped from these increased facilities of communication, and much more may be confidently prophesied for the future.

Justice is now partially administered by most competent magistrates, and the re-organisation of the Land Registry Department has been a boon to all landed proprietors. The system established in Cyprus might indeed be adopted with advantage as a model for what is much needed in England—a registration of titles and mortgages, and a complete arrangement for the immediate transfer of landed property without the intervention of the conveyancer.

Although the development of the Island was thus advancing by leaps and bounds, the late Liberal Administration unfortunately thought it necessary to give the Cypriotes elective self-government before they were prepared for it, or the survivals of Turkish maladministration had been thoroughly eradicated. The upshot has been disastrous to the results achieved by the energetic and hard-working officials to whom the material progress made by Cyprus is due. In particular, their efforts to initiate public works continually meet with opposition, and the influence of the well-to-do representatives of the people is exerted to thwart reforms in land laws which, though they would benefit the community at large, might adversely affect the interests of usurers, lawyers, and ecclesiastics.

To realise how premature the introduction of self-government has been in Cyprus it is only necessary to note the utter indifference with which the intended boon is regarded by the electorate. For instance, at the recent election at Kyrenia, although a Christian vacancy in the Legislative Council was contested by three candidates, only 123 voters

out of a total of 1103 Christian electors came to the poll. No wonder the High Commissioner remarks by way of comment that there appeared to be but little interest taken in the election.

The great strides that Cyprus has made during the last seven years have not passed unobserved in the closely contiguous mainland of Asia Minor, where similar reforms were urged by British consuls sent out by Lord Salisbury; and it is not too much to say that the special capability shown by British administrators in the task of governing Oriental races has now been recognised in that country. The outcome of this feeling may be of vast significance in the future.

CHAPTER VI

In June 1882 came the crisis in Egypt and the outbreak of Arabi's rebellion. Kitchener in Cyprus had early information of what was threatening, and telegraphed to ask for employment in any military operations on the Nile. Wolseley's reply to the General Officer who endorsed the request was somewhat enigmatic: "If by any fortunate combination of circumstances we should be forced to send troops to the Valley of the Nile, I shall not forget your friend."

Just when everybody in Cyprus was on the lookout for the seething Egyptian pot to boil over, the High Commissioner in his summer camp was asked by Kitchener—who had been ill with fever at Nicosia—for a week's leave, which was granted. Kitchener making no secret of his trip and unconscious of transgressing any rule took the next boat to Alexandria, where the fatal riot occurred on the day he landed. He accidentally missed his return boat from Alexandria to Cyprus, and Sir Beauchamp Seymour, Commanding the Mediterranean Fleet, telegraphed for an extension of his leave. This the High Commissioner flatly refused—the officer was absent without leave, and must return by the first opportunity.

The chief item of a busy week at Alexandria was a neat little bit of reconnaissance work under Colonel Tulloch, who was on board the flagship. After

Arabi's retirement towards Cairo there was a question as to the best road for an advance on the capital. Tulloch, backed by expert opinion, was pretty sure that the present high level of the Nile made the left bank impossible, but was determined to judge for himself. He was forming his plan when a tall young man entered his cabin, announcing himself as Lieutenant Kitchener of the Royal Engineers. He said he spoke Arabic well, and asked if he could be of any use. Tulloch at once enlisted him for his little adventure, and, disguised as common Levantines, the pair took tickets for Zagazig. Slipping out of the train at an intermediate point which was their objective, they saw and sketched what they wanted, and returned in a crowded train. They took some risk, for a day or two later a fair-bearded Syrian, suspected of being a British spy, was dragged out of the train at the same spot and murdered on the platform.

Kitchener was on the Admiral's ship for the bombardment, but was bitterly disappointed at not being allowed to go with a party ashore to spike the guns, the officer in command pleading that a combatant must not be in plain clothes; a medal was disallowed on the military ruling that no decoration can be awarded to an officer taking part in operations without orders.[1]

On his return to Cyprus he found himself in trouble for having left the Island without express permission. Kitchener's plausible contention to the end of his life was that, having been sent out by the Foreign Office on a mission which necessarily gave him the free run of Cyprus, he needed no "leave"

[1] The naval authorities of their own accord also endeavoured to secure the medal for him as a civilian who had done good service.

to go from one part of the Island to another; and that for him "leave of absence" could not mean anything else but permission to quit Cyprus. After waiting for a few days to allow any heated feelings to subside he wrote to his Chief:

I have been very much pained ever since my return at the view you took of my absence in Alexandria. I think it my duty to let you know how extremely anxious I am to see service in Egypt. At the same time, I feel fully the claims you have on my services with regard to the Survey. A proposal was made to me to help on the Intelligence Staff, and should a more definite appointment be offered I cannot help feeling that my remaining here in a civil capacity while military service was offered me might be used against me in my future career. My greatest ambition up to the present is to finish the Map of Cyprus, and there is nothing I should regret so much as not being able to do so after three years' work. But, at the same time, I feel sure that you will agree with me that a soldier's first duty is to serve his country in the field when an opportunity is offered him, and not to remain at his ease while others are fighting. I hope, therefore, that you will not consider it necessary to keep me in the Island if I can make arrangements which would meet your approval for carrying on my duties, so that there should be no hitch until Grant comes back. Of course, I would gladly relinquish all my pay to those doing my work, and I would leave my resignation in your hands to be used whenever you thought fit, at the same time guaranteeing to return in order to complete my work as soon as military operations should allow. I have not thought right to make any application, but, should my services be asked for, I implore you not to oppose my going, as such a course would absolutely capsize all my hopes in the Service for the future.[1]

1 As a matter of fact Kitchener's services were invited for Wolseley's

By the end of 1882 the Cyprus Survey was nearly finished, and on December 28 Sir Evelyn Wood, now in command of the new Egyptian Army, telegraphed to Kitchener from Cairo inviting him to join it. The proposal was at first declined, but on receipt of a second message two days later urging him to accept the post of second-in-command of the cavalry, Kitchener, turning a deaf ear to friends who told him he would be wasting his special talents, closed with the offer. The French and the native residents plied him with farewell *envois,* and an address presented by the latter bore the names of such ecclesiastical magnates as the Archbishop of Cyprus, the Bishop of Kyrenia, and the Abbot of Kikko.

In joining the Egyptian Army Kitchener made not only a pecuniary sacrifice but—what cost him more—a surrender of that cherished independence which special service necessitates and regimental duty disallows. Howbeit the call to Egypt had sounded, and destiny no less than duty compelled his answer.

Early in 1883 Kitchener[1] entered on his new duties as second-in-command of the Egyptian cavalry, then consisting of one regiment. He was at first a little out of harmony with life in Cairo,[2] which combined the amenities of a garrison town with the social complexities of a cosmopolitan centre. The club, the ball-room, and the racecourse had little at-

campaign against Arabi, but the High Commissioner was unable to spare him.

1 Captain R.E. 4.1.83. His rank in the Egyptian service was that of Bimbashi (= Major).

2 "In 1883 we all hated the sight of him, for two reasons—(1) because he was a 'Sapper,' and (2) because he designed a light blue uniform for his cavalry much finer than anything we had! But in '84 we got fond of him" (Extract from an officer's diary).

traction for an officer who hated gossip and revelled in work; who found his recreation in nature, or art, or genuine sport, and who took his profession seriously and laboriously—an unusual propensity in days when "talking shop" in the mess-room was often discouraged by a fine.

His outlook upon life was that of one who had scarcely tasted the ordinary pleasures of youth, and of whom it was said that with the status of a subaltern he had the mind of a statesman. He had held but little converse with the man of the world, and less with the man at the Club. His sojourn in the East would naturally modify his estimate of much that his comrades thought important, and might have put him somewhat out of touch with the conventions of modern social existence. But as a set-off he had risked his life among lawless tribes and roughed it in the desert; he had gained a peculiar knowledge of Palestine, learning and reporting on its physical conformation, its economic conditions, and its productive potentialities. In Asia Minor he had investigated the grievances of a sorely tried people and burned with indignation at oppression and wrong. His skill and science had been enlisted in the delineation of England's newly acquired territory, and absorbed in this work he had given little heed to the events which figure in the almanack of the cavalry officer.

It used to be said in Egypt that there were really two "K's."[1] There was the earlier one belonging

1 One who knew him as very few knew him, suggested that, to the last, there were *three* "K's." There was the statesman-soldier whom the world saw and honoured; there was the "K." of private life, in whom many acquaintances supposed they saw the man in his inner self; and there was the dear and intimate friend known to and understood by an inmost circle to whom alone he would speak of the things nearest his heart.

to the period of strenuous and ambitious struggle, whom his new Cairo associates at first voted gauche, shy, unclubbable. A little later there was evolved the second "K.," who was recognised as less hard, more human, more sympathetic, more companionable, more congenial, more appreciative of little kindnesses, and whose position in the Cairene official and social world became established in popularity no less than in esteem.

The year 1883 is sadly memorable in Egypt for a bad epidemic of cholera, which highly tried the energy and resources of Egyptian officials and British military authorities. It made many victims among the native troops, but showed them the stuff of which their officers were made.

Most of the Egyptian doctors fled [wrote Colonel Grenfell [1]]. Some of the native army doctors behaved well, some very badly—but the English officers almost lived in the hospitals, performing the most menial duties, and carrying out orders given by the very small staff of English doctors, who at hurried moments visited the hospitals.

In his revival and reconstruction of the Army Sir Evelyn Wood was nowhere more careful and more successful than in sifting the qualifications of the numerous British officers who sought service under him; and his earliest and happiest choices fell on such men as Chermside, Hallam Parr, Holled Smith, Watson, Wynne, Wodehouse, Rundle, and Hunter, as well as his three successors in the Sirdarship.

1 Private Diary of F.M. Lord Grenfell, at that time next senior officer to the Sirdar.

CHAPTER VII

By November more than five years had elapsed since Kitchener had seen his home. He had fairly earned a holiday, but was asked, and agreed, to employ his two months' leave in a survey of the Sinai Peninsula. A famous geologist, Professor Richard Hull, had undertaken an examination of the Araba Valley from the Gulf of Akaba through the Sinai Peninsula to the Dead Sea, and he gladly accepted the suggestion that "Major Kitchener should be responsible for the topographical survey of the country, and join it up with the already completed survey of Palestine." Kitchener wrote to Besant to make certain stipulations:

Cairo, *October* 7, 1883.

No doubt the trip will be delightful, and I should like nothing better than to go on it; but not alone. Wilson asked me if I would go in charge of the survey, with certainly one assistant, if not two. I said "Yes" to that, but it is quite a different thing to send me out alone to do the work, and I don't think at present I would undertake it. I have not been home now for over five years, and by taking my two months' leave for this trip I cut off all chance of getting home for some time to come. However, I did not consider that for a moment when I said "Yes" to Wilson's proposal, and I should not now, if I felt sure I could do the work properly; but I do not feel I could do

all the work by myself in a satisfactory manner. Of course, I could run a reconnaissance of the road we travel; but I should be rather ashamed of our work if, with an assistant, I could not do rather more than that. . . . I wish very much you could have sent out a sextant before, so that I might have had a little practice with it. I have not taken an observation with a sextant for 12 years, and it was the one thing I asked for.

Hull and Kitchener met in Egypt, and on November 10 a start was made from Suez for the Sinai Peninsula. No Egyptian escort was taken: where it was obtainable, it was not wanted; where it might have proved useful, it was not to be had. Each day's journey was from dawn to dusk; a small luncheon tent was usually pitched at noon, but Kitchener—as Hull noted in his diary—was "usually too far off and too busy to join in this meal."

Jebel Musa (Sinai) being reached, the route—one seldom chosen—took a north-easterly direction towards Akaba, Kitchener making a wide detour to the left in order to locate an important spring.

They were now in the desert of the Exodus. On their reaching Mount Hor, the head sheikh positively and not very politely forbade their ascending Mount Hor, and insisted that each member of the party visiting Petra must pay thirty dollars. Hull declared that they would neither forgo their visit to Mount Hor, nor submit to extortion as regards Petra. An excited discussion ensued, when Kitchener turned up and produced from his pocket a firman granted to him while British Vice-Consul in Anatolia, and authorising him to visit without let or hindrance all the Holy Places in the Turkish Empire. In afterlife he often spoke of his first impression of Mount

Hor "appearing to rise in several pinnacles, the highest of which is surmounted by a glistening white dome covering the tomb of the patriarch Aaron."

At Petra angles were taken on several prominent points, both backwards along the line of the Araba Valley and forwards as far north as the hills overlooking the Hor, and the elevation of Mount Hor, previously calculated at 4260 feet, was corrected by Kitchener's triangulation to 4580 feet.

The Wadi-el-Araba, west of Mount Hor, is a great plain fifteen miles across, and the west side being better known than the east, it was decided to devote more attention to the latter and to work northwards at no great distance from the base of the hills. From the ridge, Samrat Fiddan, rising to an elevation of 844 feet, was made a series of triangulations, and from the Wadi Suweiteh, north of the Samrat ridge, a detailed survey of the western margin of the limestone plateau.

Fifteen days after leaving Akaba the party found themselves standing on the brink of the Dead Sea basin, where a halt was made till December 27. On the 31st a letter from Sir Evelyn Baring [1] announced the disasters to Baker and Hicks in the Sudan, and Kitchener with the four Arabs who had brought the missive took a short cut back to Egypt. Hull wrote:

> Kitchener has proved a most agreeable companion during our journeyings of nearly two months, while his knowledge of the Arab customs and language, and his skill in dealing with the Bedawin, have proved of much service to the Expedition. He has worked unsparingly and under many difficulties—owing to the necessary rapidity of our movements—

1 British Agent and Consul-General.

to produce a correct outline map of the district we had traversed between Mount Sinai and Palestine. . . . He returns to Cairo by a road probably never before crossed by an Englishman. Before we struck our tents for the day's march into Gaza we saw our friend, mounted on his little horse, start on a south-westerly line of march for Ismailia, which he eventually reached in safety.[1]

From Bir-es-Seba Kitchener finished his journey to Egypt; the "line of march" pluckily chosen was not along the road near the coast by El Arish, but across the trackless desert:

By myself [he wrote a little later], with only four camels and four Arabs, I made my way across to Ismailia, about 200 miles. One of the Arabs had been part of the road fifteen years before; none of the others knew anything of it, but they were good men from the Egyptian Hawatat, under a relation of Sheikh Ibn Shedid. We passed a good many Arabs of the Jerabin and Ma'azi tribes, and I was received amongst them as Abdullah Bey, an Egyptian official, thus reviving a name well known and much revered amongst them; they supposed me to be a relation of the great Sheikh Abdullah. I was everywhere well received. . . . My route—for there was no path or road—was a good deal over rolling sand dunes, with no water-supply. At one time we had a council of war, whether we should go

1 Kitchener himself wrote: "My report will show how the work was done, and if you measure the distance I had to go I think you will find I got over as much ground as a camel would allow. They are bad beasts for surveying. I used to keep mine at a good trot for a bit until he got cross, which he showed by roaring and then suddenly shutting up all four legs and coming with a thud on the ground, at the same moment springing up again and dashing off in an opposite direction. Continued correction caused him to collapse again and then roll, which was decidedly uncomfortable. I don't think I have ever done such hard work as I had up that Wadi Araba from Akaba to the Dead Sea. The result, however, is I think very satisfactory. I have been able to run a triangulation up the whole way, and join on to the old work by measuring a base at Akaba. . . . By going up from the south end of the Dead Sea to Bir-es-Seba I was able to put in a corner of the map and join on to our old work."

back for water or push on to Ismailia; but as we had brought as much as we could carry from the last supply I insisted on pushing on, and we reached Ismailia without loss.

Kitchener made light of a very rough and risky journey, to which moreover must be debited a permanent, if slight, injury to his eyesight; wishing to differ as little as possible from his companions he kept his British spectacles in his pocket, and the scorching glare, as he afterwards said, "burnt" his eyes:

The last two days' travelling were the most trying I have ever experienced; a very strong west wind blew the sand up into our faces, so that the camels would hardly face it. . . . I can certainly say that it is a 200-mile trip I have no wish to traverse again. We missed our way only once, for a short time, during the whole march, and I was much struck by the wonderful manner in which the Arabs can make their way across difficult country without compass to guide them. I travelled every day from 8 A.M. to 6 P.M. without stopping, and with very little variation. One night we had to travel a good deal after dark to make a brackish pool of water, and I very nearly lost the party, as we had to separate to hunt for the water. There was only one supply of good water after Wady Feira, and that was in Wady-el-Arish; after that we found only one brackish small supply, as far as Ismailia.

On his arrival in Cairo Kitchener found himself in the thick of military duties, and had to ask Besant's help to polish his Report.

ABBASSIYEH, *March* 1, 1884.

We are living in such exciting times here that I have barely time to get Sergeant Armstrong off with the work.

I hope you will put the Report into shipshape order when it is printed. I wish I could have done it more justice. . . . I hope the Committee will be satisfied with the work done. 3000 square miles is not a bad total for two months! . . . I should like very much to know what Sir Charles Wilson's opinion of the work is, considering *the time and the way we were travelling*. . . .

Sir Charles Wilson's opinion was: "Your work is extremely valuable . . . and has decidedly added to your reputation as a surveyor and explorer." [1]

1 Walter Besant, as Secretary of the Palestine Exploration Fund, writes to Kitchener on April 3: "I have just got your note of the 21st [March]. . . . The boxes, maps, etc., are all come and have been examined by Wilson and the Committee. Everybody is greatly pleased with them."

CHAPTER VIII

Early in 1884 a contingent was detailed to operate against the Mahdi's forces from Suakin. This was to be a purely British force made up from the Cairo and Alexandria garrisons and of troops on their way home from India. The Egyptian cavalry regiment had sent its two senior officers—Colonel Taylor, 19th Hussars, and Major Charles Grenfell, 10th Hussars, who had left to rejoin their units, and Kitchener shared with his only colleague, Captain La Terrière, 18th Hussars, a little house on the edge of the desert; he put his men through a strong course of training, the early morning ride including a steeplechase course, with solid fences over which the Egyptian soldiers took many tosses with much composure. La Terrière wrote that after the early morning drill it was an even chance whether his senior came to breakfast or "didn't want any breakfast and went straight off to work in the orderly room. Luncheon and dinner were equally movable feasts, for he might prefer to go to bed for a while, and then get up to work at his Sinai Survey all the afternoon. Dinner might be at seven or be put off till nine, and he might either go to bed directly it was over or else sit up half the night at work. Nothing seemed to matter except the work in hand. One never knew,"

wrote the long-suffering junior, "at what time one was to get up or go to bed, at what hour one was going to get breakfast or luncheon or dinner, or whether one was going to get a meal at all."

Kitchener's constitution seemed then, as for the rest of his life, quite proof against irregularity or neglect in the matter of food and sleep. The marked improvement in his health at this period, which contrasts with the delicacy of his early years, was largely due to the Egyptian heat, in which he revelled; his abhorrence of cold was perhaps the only physical weakness which he was never able to overcome.

He did not often [wrote La Terrière] join in our little dinners and jaunts at Cairo, nor in our polo matches or paper chases; but he was not in the least shy in company, nor did he run away from the ladies. He had a few friends of his own, his taste in womankind tending rather to the motherly and "unsmart." He was certainly less a man of the world at that age than any one I ever met—in many ways just a boy, with a boy's hearty laugh and cheery manner.

The contemporary pen-portrait depicts him as

very lean, with legs that seemed too long for his body, a narrow chest, and sloping shoulders. He had not an ounce of spare flesh on him. He was very sunburnt, which made his big light moustache look almost white; and he had thick and rather fair hair on a head with a very flat top to it, on which he always wore a tarboosh, even in the hottest sun. His slim appearance gave the impression of his being taller than he really was. He was brusque and cheery, and the curious cast in his left eye gave you the feeling that he saw right through you.

On February 8 the Sirdar ordered Lieutenant-

Colonel Chermside [1] and Major Kitchener to Keneh. Their object was to be threefold: (1) to see Ahmed Khalifa, the sheikh of the friendly Ababdeh,[2] at Keneh, and through him to cultivate relations with the Bedawin of the country between Keneh and Kosseir [3]; (2) to collect information about any of the tribes, especially as to slave caravans recently passing through that district; and (3) to decide upon and then reconnoitre the route to Kosseir.

These orders were hardly issued before they were modified. Chermside was sent to Suakin, and Kitchener was to go alone to Keneh, where he was to examine and report on the Keneh-Kosseir road or roads. In the Report he had a good deal more to tell than the authorities expected to hear. Not content with noting the lie of the country and thoroughly investigating the character and disposition of the local Bedawin, he planned a scheme for training and utilising a Bedawin force against the Mahdi. His Report was perused—not pigeon-holed—at the War Office and passed to the Foreign Office; Sir Charles Wilson, now Head of the Intelligence in Egypt, was nervous lest the Agency should be sensitive as to the Foreign Office receiving detailed information through any other channel than official despatches:

Every one at home has been delighted with your reports on the Keneh-Kosseir roads. Lord Granville and the Foreign Office are much pleased with the way in which you

1 Later Lieut.-General Sir Herbert Chermside.

2 Brother of Hussein Pasha Khalifa, head sheikh. According to Keane (*Ethnology*, p. 387, and *Man Past and Present*, p. 485) the Ababdeh are not Semite Arabs but of Hamitic Berber stock, as are the Bisharin, Hadendoa, Beni-Amer, and others. They have from the earliest times occupied the whole region between the Nile and the Red Sea.

3 The points at which the Nile and the coast most nearly approach each other.

did your work, and Lord Wolseley [Adjutant-General] was also much taken with your reports. I thought some of the remarks in your letters so interesting that I gave some extracts privately to Lord Granville, who, it appears, has sent them in a private note to Baring. It was done without my knowledge, and I am rather sorry for it, as it may possibly lead to some unpleasantness at Cairo. (6.4.84.)

Kitchener had resumed his cavalry duties under rather depressing conditions, and not unnaturally fretted over the decision that the Egyptian Army was not sufficiently trained to take part in the attack to be launched from Suakin. He was only to be satisfied with a full measure of active work:

I daresay I shall be home before very long, [he wrote to Besant] as everything here is looking dark and gloomy for us—*i.e.* the Egyptian Army; and I, for one, don't care to draw pay if I do not do the work.

Yet at this very moment he was on the threshold of that section of his career which first brought him into touch with the Sudan and in great measure determined his future in the East.

The heroic Gordon in the fulfilment of his mission to Khartum [1] was himself soon to be isolated, and the increasing volume of the Sudanese rebellion and the Mahdist movement compelled the British Government to abandon the idea of an easy evacuation of beleaguered garrisons. The happy thought was now conceived of going cash in hand to some of the Bedawin tribes to induce them to attempt the rescue of Gordon and his European companions from their

1 The spelling of place-names is generally in accordance with original documents and contemporary maps. When Kitchener was raised to the peerage he expressed a decided preference for the spelling Khartoum, as he thought Kitchener of Khartum phonetically ugly.

very parlous position. As Khartum seemed doomed to investment hope centred on Berber, now regarded as the real key of the Sudan. The two British Generals in Egypt favoured respectively the alternatives of an advance by the Suakin-Berber route—if possible with a new railway—and of a march on Berber by the Korosko desert. British officers were to be selected to organise a native military force for the protection of Berber. There was as yet no definite intention of sending British troops [1] to carry out the advance on Berber, because the formidable nature of the Mahdist movement, based on religious fanaticism and organised under strict discipline, was unknown to the British public and hardly realised by the Government. As a preliminary measure Baring asked the Sirdar to open up the Korosko-Berber route; and Kitchener had scarcely returned to his regiment when he was bidden on March 27 to hand it over and proceed south with Captain Rundle.[2] Later his great aim was to join hands with Gordon at Khartum, but his present objective was Berber, whence he was to open the road to Suakin. At Berber all possible help was to be rendered to the Governor, Hussein Pasha Khalifa,[3] and no expense was to be spared in communicating with General

1 The idea of a British expedition dates from April 1884, and the opinions of military authorities were taken on its feasibility.

2 Afterwards General Sir Leslie Rundle. He then held rank as Bimbashi in the Egyptian Army.

3 Hussein was head sheikh of the Ababdeh and brother of Ahmed. When Berber fell he was carried away prisoner to the Mahdi. Gordon thought him a traitor; Kitchener judged differently: see his letter below, 6.8.84. Hussein conformed outwardly to Mahdism, but Sir Samuel Baker's view of him was lenient, like Kitchener's: "If you should see Hussein at Cairo, give him my kindest regards. He is an excellent fellow. Gordon in his *Journal* is hard upon him. Of course he could not hold out at Berber, or remain 'loyal' after our absurd proclamations; he was forced into self-preservation" (Baker to Kitchener, 5.7.85).

Gordon. Kitchener was further directed, before attempting to reach Berber, to ascertain, first at Korosko and then at Abu Hamed, whether the advance of his party could be made with safety, and he was given full discretion to act accordingly. He was to inform himself as to the state of feeling among the tribes near Suakin, and he was authorised to incur expenses up to a total of £10,000.

Kitchener and Rundle remained at Assuan—the furthest point at which the Egyptian Government could at that time exercise effective control—throughout April, May, and a part of June, busy with the organisation of the Ababdeh force. Kitchener wrote in high spirits:

POST-BOAT ON THE NILE, *May* 3, 1884.

I am now having an exciting time in Upper Egypt. I have got 1000 Bedawin under my command and expect 1000 more, all mounted on dromedaries. I hope to advance soon on Abu Hamed.[1] I am just going back to Cairo to explain matters to the authorities. Excuse scrawl, as this d——d boat is very unsteady. (Kitchener to Besant.)

Early in June the two moved farther up the Nile to Korosko, which became their headquarters.[2] Berber was by this time out of the question; Abu Hamed was closely invested by the Mahdi's regular

1 The Sirdar favoured an advance to Berber *via* Korosko and Abu Hamed, and Rundle in December reconnoitred this route as far as Murad Wells with the Ababdeh Force.

2 "The steamer with Poore on board has arrived, and will not leave till to-morrow" (Kitchener to the Sirdar, 9.6.84). "We were at Korosko, each sitting under his own tree, when the first paddle-wheel steamer manned by blue-jackets and flying the White Ensign came up as the forerunner of the Gordon Expedition" (Letter from Rundle, 1.3.17). "Passing Korosko he pointed out to me a tree under which he said he had lived for some months" (Diary kept by Viscount Broome, 1916, while on a visit to his uncle, Lord Kitchener, in 1910–11).

troops, and even Dongola was threatened. The rebels proposed after seizing Dongola to make their way through the eastern desert and approach Egypt alike by the desert route and the river. In point of fact Berber had already surrendered on May 20, though the news was for about six weeks treated as doubtful. Khartum was completely isolated, and there could be no "opening up" of the Suakin-Berber route from the Berber end.

The Intelligence officer strove to persuade his seniors and superiors that not only would the Sudan have to be reconquered, but that Egypt itself would have to be defended against invasion. Here, as in the Sudan, as in South Africa, as in India, and—above all—as in the Great War, Kitchener's was the warning voice; on each occasion he denounced the delusive habit of under-estimating the perils and requirements of war. To crush the Mahdist movement would, he now said, require 20,000 British troops—a statement of a prophetic character, as fourteen years later he himself assembled 22,000 troops 40 miles below Khartum to deal the *coup de grâce* to the Dervish tyranny.

CHAPTER IX

In the second week of June Kitchener started off on a seventeen days' reconnaissance in the Korosko desert, leaving Rundle [1] to carry on at Korosko itself and to continue the work of enlisting and training the Ababdeh Frontier Force. To this was largely due the successful navigation of the Nile by the British Expedition in the following autumn, for the Ababdeh controlled all the routes across the Nubian desert from Korosko to Abu Hamed, and were strong on the right river bank from above Assuan to beyond Korti.

Had this rambling tribe been allowed to become hostile, instead of being systematically subsidised and wooed into "friendliness," there is little doubt that Wolseley's long line of unprotected boats might have been very roughly handled. Moreover, nearly all the trustworthy news of what was happening at

1 Rundle evidently did not repose on a bed of roses at Korosko. On July 26 Grenfell requests explanation of a statement that a post of Bedawin has "deserted." Rundle, hearing that Kitchener has telegraphed from Assuan to have certain men caught who were absent without leave, and doubting what answer to send, wires to Kitchener: "I would respectfully suggest to you, if I am to carry on your work successfully in your absence, I should be informed of these sort of things." Again, on August 7, Grenfell confronts Major Rundle with a statement by an Arab married to an Ababdeh wife that a meeting of Bisharin and Ababdeh, attended by Kitchener's post, has discussed revolt, and adjourned its decision. Rundle explains that the meeting was arranged by Kitchener himself, through Beshir Gibran, for the Bisharin sheikhs to attend; and that they had been written to by Rundle and told to await Kitchener's return from Dongola, "when he hopes to meet them."

Khartum and in the Sudan used to come by the Eastern desert routes controlled by this Frontier Force, and was generally passed through to Korosko.

Kitchener established a series of strong posts extending due east from Korosko to the coast, thus securing timely intelligence of any rebel movement against Egypt, and checking any enemy advance through the desert or threat to Suez.

In June he inspected the outlying posts commanded by the Sheikh Beshir Gibran [1] and found them all in excellent order. He then, with Gibran's help, tried to account for a Mahdist agent, one Shamyun, who was tampering with the loyalty of a couple of hundred of the Ababdeh. Shamyun took refuge with the powerful tribe of the Bisharin,[2] whose chiefs, however, parried his invitation to join the Mahdi in a "holy war." They were anxious to remain neutral; this Kitchener suavely assured them was impossible. The sheikhs, though they feared the Mahdi, were not unmoved by a vague report of the landing of 20,000 British troops at Suakin, and their mouths watered at the substantial monetary offers by which Kitchener outbid the other side. For the present they chose to sit on the fence, and

1 Kitchener's confidence in Gibran seemed to be justified. He brought him to Cairo—where he was known as "Kitchener's Sheikh"—and subsequently recommended him for promotion to Bey.

Five months later Wilson wrote from Dongola (November 28) to Kitchener at Debbeh: "I am a little uneasy about Sir Evelyn Wood and Rundle, and their dealing with the Arabs. I fear Rundle has thrown himself too much into the hands of H. P. K.'s [Hussein Pasha Khalifa's] sons and snubbed Gibran—in fact, been reversing your policy. Lord Wolseley is ready to write to Gibran. What should he be promised as a reward? Please write me confidentially your views about Ababdeh politics, H. P. K.'s sons, and the treatment of the Bisharin." Nevertheless, Sir Evelyn Wood's opinion of Gibran's fidelity was distinctly favourable. After Kitchener's arrival in London a journalist noted among his belongings a portrait of the sheikh.

2 See Appendix, p. 69.

severely taxed the time and temper of the two officers.

Kitchener arrived with his Arab escort at Assuan on June 30, and wrote to Besant:

Just got back from a seventeen days' desert ride and a rather exciting hunt of one of the Mahdi's Emirs. I got within one day of him with 200 men, and he had only 50. I was told he was most fanatical, and that nothing would induce him to go back; that he had declared to die or advance; and, after all this, the brute bolted into a country where I could not follow him. All my splendid arrangements for surrounding him collapsed. Unless an English expedition comes, I do not think we shall be able to hold this frontier, as the rebels mean coming on, and are much more disciplined and fanatical than people give them credit for. The Khedive has given me a capital firman making me head of the Ababdeh and Bisharin Arabs with full powers. I am now Special Commissioner for Arabs. Look up Stanford about the Cyprus Map.[1] It ought to be nearly ready.

At the beginning of July he was back at Korosko, which remained for some time his nominal headquarters. He was by that time convinced that Berber had fallen, though his opinion was persistently discounted at home by officials unwilling to credit any news which would force them to take any action.

Sir Samuel Baker, though he differed from Kitchener in certain details as to the methods of helping Gordon, agreed that prompt action might have relieved Khartum:

1 The Map of Cyprus was stated by the publisher on August 11, 1884, to be "complete without hills," and obtainable within a month. The Map, "with hills complete," was estimated as "ready for publication in February next." Kitchener was then calling his Cyprus Survey "the apple of his eye."

I am delighted [he wrote in August] to see that you are leading. You have been doing excellent service, and in letters to the *Times* and other papers on the subject I have endeavoured to draw attention to the energy you have displayed in the desert journeys at this hottest season.

After the ultimate catastrophe he wrote:

Had a proper desert equipment been prepared beforehand, and a transport service arranged at Korti, no time would have been lost. . . . If they had given you a force of 2000 British troops, to act in conjunction with the Mudir of Dongola, at the outset, when you were the only British officer there, you would have saved Khartum.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IX

"The Bisharin or Bishariyeh, known to classical writers as Blemmyes, call themselves Arabs, but are darker in colour and more European in feature than the true Arab. Their hair, like that of the Abyssinians, is slightly frizzled. They are divided into numerous tribes, each with its chief, some of the principal being (1) the Ahmedab, on the Atbara; (2) the Amarar, in the mountains between Elba and Suakin; (3) the El Betranne, between Berber and Suakin; (4) the Shinterab, to the south of Elba; (5) the Hadendoa, a large tribe at Zaka; (6) the Adererad, the most important—formerly near Suakin—intermediaries for the trade to the coast; and (7) the Belgab, south of the Wady Meisa. The Bisharin use camels and own no horses; they are armed with lances, two-edged swords, daggers, and round or oval shields of hide; their favourite mode of fighting is to hamstring or rip open the enemy or his mount. They kill males and enslave women and children. Their landed property is owned tribally. The Belgab and the Amarar are the handsomest and the most immoral." (Report by Major Kitchener, 1884.)

CHAPTER X

In July Kitchener received new and concise instructions. As often happened, the orders arose from, and gave effect to, suggestions he himself had made:

Go to Amara,[1] get all the information you can, and, if it is in the hands of the enemy, return. If all is safe, then go to Dongola, or as far as you can without risk. Take whatever number of Gararish or Ababdeh you think proper. You are to use every precaution. Leave Rundle in charge of all the outposts in the Nubian desert. Get back as soon as possible. Try while there to send off men to Gordon. Try to negotiate with Saleh, chief of the Kababish,[2] that he may aid Gordon. (19.7.84.)

He was also authorised to disburse the princely sum of £50 monthly, "if it were absolutely necessary to spend so much."

Kitchener was already showing that financial instinct which won for him later the good word of

1 Near Ginniss.

2 The Kababish lay between Dongola and Kordofan. Kitchener proved to be right in doubting whether Saleh was powerful enough to carry out this policy. On August 29 he reports: "Saleh says, if the soldiers will come and take Khartum and Berber, he will bring his tribe, who will join him and march on Kordofan." In his draft Report on the Tribes Kitchener says: "The Sheikh Saleh was first with the Mahdi, who, however, killed his brother, Sheik-el-Tom. Saleh, with a few men, went away. The son of the murdered sheikh remained with the Mahdi, and another nephew of Saleh took the tribe." In 1885 Saleh was offered the governorship of a district. He was killed in 1887 while resisting the Khalifa, when the Kababish were worsted in a decisive engagement.

the two men towards whom he constantly looked. Lord Salisbury quoted him as the solitary instance of a soldier who understood and really practised economy. Lord Cromer wrote: "He did not think that extravagance was the necessary handmaid of efficiency. On the contrary, he was a rigid economist, and, whilst making adequate provision for all essential and necessary expenditure, suppressed with a firm hand any tendency towards waste and extravagance."[1] He always seemed to know how, and how much, public money should be spent, and, keeping a tight hand on the strings of the public purse, was determined that men, white or coloured, who had done good service should receive their fair and full due. The clear accounts which he wrote up during this period, and which are still extant, show scrupulous care in making payments to natives.

A promise made by the Sirdar on July 19 to send him £500 to Halfa "in gold" had reference to an incident that had occurred just six weeks before. On June 9 Kitchener had complained that a sum of £3315 which had been sent him was "all in the coins objected to." Evidently this money was intended for payment to natives who wanted it in gold because of a depreciation in silver:

I had arranged for £860 in gold, but the Finance stopped it at Assuan. This is very annoying, as it upsets my calculations. May I issue the dollars at the rate they are received by the Treasury in payment of taxes?

1 From India Kitchener wrote in 1903: "I would urge that officers can, if properly selected, be trained to deal efficiently with financial questions of considerable importance, and that it would be greatly to the advantage of the State if officers were made to realise more fully than they do now the grave importance of all Army expenditure. . . . The simplification of the present system of accounting in the Army is a matter of great importance if officers are to deal effectively with this subject."

The plan—which he himself never endorsed—of endeavouring to rescue Gordon by bribing the important tribe of the Kababish to relieve Khartum was now to be actively prosecuted. On the amount of the bribe the Agency (July 22) "could not give definite instructions." As a reward for bringing out Gordon, £10,000 might certainly, it was thought, be offered, and "if it were considered absolutely desirable, even double that sum."[1] The Sirdar would have preferred to leave the matter to Kitchener's judgment, but opined that £10,000 was an emple subsidy for Saleh and Co., though even that generous gift was a mere fleabite in comparison with the subsequent expense of not effecting the relief!

At the end of July Kitchener was told to prospect personally and on the spot the precise attitude of the Mudir of Dongola. This personage, Mustafa Yawer, was a Circassian sent to the Sudan in 1864, appointed to the Mudirieh in 1877, removed by Gordon in February 1884, and immediately reinstated by the Egyptian Government. He was politically a doubtful character, and personally seemed disposed to swing from side to side, but the situation of his province required him to be carefully considered.

The Ababdeh Frontier Force was accordingly handed over to Rundle—much to his chagrin—Kitchener having told the Sirdar that Rundle was now proficient enough in Arabic to merit a certificate. Rundle ruefully remarked that this flattering recommendation was the means of dumping him in Korosko while his colleague went off to the front!

1 Gordon, under some unaccountable misapprehension, thought (*Journal*, p. 360) that the money was to be offered to the Mahdi to purchase his release!

Kitchener, at his own express request, repaired to Dongola unaccompanied by any European, and with an escort of twenty Ababdeh who could be trusted. A holy dervish had administered to them a solemn oath, with hands crossed over the Koran,[1] that "his enemies should be their enemies, and their friends his friends," and when they were afterwards bidden to accompany him to Dongola, they kept their oath. He assumed Arab dress, took his life in his hands, and with £500 in his girdle and his Ababdeh guards set out on a six days' camel ride across the desert.

On August 2 he wired to the Sirdar his safe arrival at Dongola, where he halted for the night outside the town, reporting next day that he had been well received by the Mudir, who sent word that "he was glad to see him, but that he must wear Arab dress" —a precaution already taken. His arrival was in the nick of time. The Mudir had been coquetting with the Mahdi's offer to make him his Emir, and within three days would be called upon to render his obeisance. His thoughts were now turned round to Cairo. A council of the Mudirieh was hurriedly convened, and it was decided to put off the Mahdi, and to retain Kitchener as a sort of hostage.

The British officer entered Dongola with due dignity, being received by the Mudir sitting cross-legged on a chair, rosary in hand, and wearing the brown felt cap of a dervish—between his prayers assuring his guest that a Circassian with a white skin could never make common cause with a black-skinned Mahdi. Kitchener wrote:

1 Sir Samuel Baker wrote on August 10: "There is a splendid field open for you at this moment, as you are alone, and you will have much more influence over the people than you would have with an English companion."

. . . The Mudir impresses me favourably; he is exactly like a dervish, and most religious. He assures me forcibly of his loyalty to the Government, and implores that soldiers may be sent. He says that with 7000 he would open the whole Sudan, and relieve Gordon. The people are with him, and there seems to be no doubt of the last battle having been a victory.

Next day Kitchener wrote to Colonel Stewart[1] at Khartum: ". . . Every one has been most excited about your position. The Government have not yet declared whether a relief expedition will be sent, or which way it will go. . . . I think the expedition will come this way; I hope it will be soon. I have been sent up to see what can be done with the Kababish, but I fear they are mostly with the Mahdi."

Until now no official account of the fall of Berber on May 20 had reached Cairo, and on August 6 Kitchener gives the Sirdar the first authentic details: "There is a good deal of talking here of the 'treachery' of Hussein Pasha Khalifa, but I see no proof of anything of the sort; 75 of the Ababdeh were killed during the engagement. Hussein Pasha Khalifa, according to the latest news here, has been sent to the Mahdi."

The question of the route[2] for the impending Expedition now pressed. The Sirdar wired on August 4:

The most important work for you to do, after arranging to communicate with Gordon and for a meeting with Sheikh

1 Colonel J. D. H. Stewart, 11th Hussars, Gordon's companion.

2 Kitchener's report (August 18, 1884) on routes (1) Debbeh to Khartum, (2) Ambukol to Bishara, or (3) Metamma, and (4) Merawi to Berber, was very clear and complete. It mentions incidentally that of the Arab tribes hereabouts only two remain partially loyal—the Hauhauhin and the Sawarab, both small tribes. The Hassaniyeh and Kababish and the small tribe of the Keriyat are with the Mahdi.

Saleh of the Kababish, is to find out all you can as to all the routes leading from Dongola and from Debbeh to Khartum, and also from Ambukol to Shendy. The information required is that usually compiled in all reconnaissance reports —it being of course understood that, as you will not be able to traverse the routes yourself, you must be dependent on what you hear.

It may have been "understood" in Cairo that Kitchener would "not be able to traverse the routes himself"; but he had no notion of being wholly "dependent on what he heard," and was quite prepared, at least in part, to "traverse the routes himself."

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER X

"*The Kababish.*—This is one of the largest, if not the largest, tribe of Arabs in the Sudan. They range from Kordofan and Darfur to the Nile at Abu Gus, and as far north as the Oasis of Selimah. Their principal occupation is breeding camels and transporting merchandise. They have the monopoly of the carrying trade from Kordofan and Darfur and have charge of the roads. They principally bring gum and other products and take back dates and cotton goods. They are ruled over by Sheikh Saleh Fuddlallah Bey, who used to live in considerable state before the present Sudan troubles began." (Kitchener, *Report on the Arab Tribes from Dongola to Khartum.*)

Elsewhere he says that Sheikh Saleh rules one section, and Sheikh Selim Isawi another.

CHAPTER XI

KITCHENER was hardly settled at Dongola before the aspect of his work underwent a change. He had been sent there on August 1 to ascertain the actual doings and designs of the shifty Mudir—who accorded an equal welcome to the Mahdi's messenger and the Khedive's money—and to clear up doubts as to the situation south of Dongola. Generally he was to be the eyes, ears, and antennae of the Cairo authorities. On August 8 it was definitely decided to send some British troops beyond Wadi Halfa, and Kitchener at once realised that Debbeh, at the bend of the river, would not only become an important jumping-off place for the Khartum Relief Expedition, but was also the best base for his intelligence and reconnaissance work.[1] His urgent request to be allowed to go there was readily granted by the Sirdar, who gave him "wide discretion as to his movements," while trusting him "not to incur undue

1 The Sirdar wrote both privately and officially to Lord Wolseley, then Adjutant-General at home, recommending Kitchener for a brevet majority, but the recommendation was disallowed. Later, however, after a conference with Baring, a strongly-worded telegram was sent to the Foreign Office asking that pressure should be put on the War Office to recognise the officer's special merits. The telegram reached London after Wolseley's departure for Egypt, and the news of Kitchener's promotion, which had been granted, awaited the General on his arrival at Port Said. His first words on meeting the Sirdar at Halfa were, "Well, you had your way about Kitchener!"

risk." He was also authorised to take with him as escort 100 of the Ababdeh.

Of the four desert routes which he then examined and reported upon, he considered that from Debbeh to Khartum most suitable for the Expedition, and, characteristically anxious to test it himself, he persuaded three sheikhs to take him by it to within three days' march of Khartum. Kitchener was soon able to notify to Stewart the approach of the British troops, reminding him that they must needs pass through Debbeh, whatever their subsequent course. He really wished to know whether Gordon preferred the river to the desert route, for the leader of the Expedition was sure to be influenced by Gordon's opinion; and a month later he wrote to Gordon: "A few words about what you wish done would be very acceptable."

The Mudir of Dongola had not yet made up his crafty mind as to whether he would join the Mahdi or remain "loyal" to Egypt. To the Mahdi's offer to appoint him his Emir of Dongola, Cairo had countered with the proposal that he and his troops should receive a year's pay in consideration of his holding the province against the Dervishes for six months. On August 7 Lord Granville wired to Cairo:

> We do not object to pay the Mudir of Dongola, if he is to be trusted, and provided it does not entail further payment in case of bad behaviour, or if the present reason for payment of the subsidy may have ceased; but it would be desirable to await a report from Kitchener. It should also be remembered that the sum available for such expenditure is not large.

Kitchener was always ready—possibly at that period a little too ready—to give Orientals credit for sincerity until they had proved themselves unworthy of confidence. Just as he refused to believe ill of Hussein Pasha Khalifa at Berber, so he went to Dongola unprejudiced by anything he had heard against the Mudir. But he quickly took that worthy's measure, and, when consulted on a proposal to make the Mudir an independent governor, wired to Cairo:

August 19, 1884.—I am decidedly of opinion that the Mudir could not hold his own, and trade could not flourish under his rule; nor could he ever be trusted. My reasons are, first, that the feeling against Turkish rule in the Sudan has caused the present troubles, and "Death to Turkish Oppression" is the war-cry of the rebels. The Mudir is a very fanatical Turk and surrounds himself with Turks. Secondly, I never knew trade flourish under Turkish rule, and, as far as I have seen, the Mudir affords no exception to the rule. Thirdly, the Mudir has already told me several lies and tried to deceive me, and is a confirmed intriguer. The English are liked and respected, and I feel sure an Englishman could rule here under the circumstances you describe, and keep the whole place quiet. I would not mind guaranteeing to do so myself under certain conditions.

This last sentence is suggestive; coming events were casting their shadows before. Kitchener was being attracted to a task for which Gordon preordained him when he wrote: "Whoever comes up here had better appoint Major Kitchener Governor-General"; adding, "I like Baker's description of Kitchener: 'The man whom I have always placed my hopes upon, Major Kitchener, R.E., one of the

few very superior British officers, with a cool and good head and a hard constitution, combined with untiring energy.'"[1] On "the man" public attention was being focussed at home, and flattering portraits and benevolent press notices testified to his vogue. He himself found more pleasure in hearing that his familiarity with Arab mentality and methods was recognised at Cairo, where his opinion was invited on points of policy as well as on facts. A single telegram of that period shows him proffering advice *de omnibus rebus* and with authority:

September 5.—If the [? Bisharin] chiefs come, get them to sign a document protesting their loyalty and guaranteeing the safety of any one you may send into their country; also declaring that they will not allow any rebels or disaffected persons to enter their country from the south or to remain in it; also promising that they will send representatives paid by you to stay at Assuan to receive your orders for the chiefs. You will then be able to leave the Assuan road open for them. You might also pay them monthly about £50 apiece, and give them a contract to bring you 1000 camels cheap, if you want them: they have any number. If they will not sign—which, if they come, is highly improbable—keep them till I get a reply through my messenger, or until I can join you.

I think Rundle is capable, if he would like the work. Otherwise, I think the proposals of his made to you at Korosko for the disposal of the Force[2] would work well. There is no necessity for keeping on any one except Beshir Gibran and his force. I strongly recommend him to be made a Bey. Please insist on Nubar [the Premier] doing

1 Sir Samuel Baker to Gordon, August 1884 (*Journal*, November 26). Gordon writes on the same date: "It is delicious to find not one civil word from any official personage except Kitchener."

2 *I.e.* the Ababdeh Frontier Force. Rundle remained with it until the end of the campaign.

this: I do not think he likes Gibran.[1] Please tell the Gararish that unless they go to Selimah [oasis] you will employ the Aleigat [2] there, and observe the result! I think the Mounted Infantry would be much better on horses. The Mudir's *mahun* leaves at midday to-day with twelve boats; all the others are north, but I cannot find out exactly how many there are between this and the cataracts. The river has been swept for boats. The Mudir has some five or six, and the soldiers at Debbeh have as many more carrying provisions.

If I am to remain here, will you make my rank definite in Orders? I am afraid of the *dénouement* destroying all my influence here. I could not work with a local force under the rank I have assumed. I think I should have power to move about and join the Mudir when necessary. . . . I think you should consider the following points: First, the Mudir ought to have some one with him to see what he is doing and to help him in English matters; otherwise, I foresee friction. Secondly, I have sent several messengers to Gordon and am expecting replies shortly. These messengers should now be properly organised and arranged.

Kitchener was not yet free from his responsibilities at Korosko, as Rundle bluntly reminded him: [3]

1 On August 26 he had written to Rundle to recommend that a messenger be sent, without Gibran's knowledge, to the Bisharin to upbraid them for leaving his letters unanswered: "Say that you hear, without believing it, that they are disaffected, and that you will be glad to meet them, as I had arranged. Order Beshir [Gibran] to stop all Bisharin from passing his line at Assuan or Derawi. Tell him I do not consider he has managed the matter at all well, and that I cannot understand how the last messengers I sent—for whom I paid him—have brought no answer yet."

2 "The Gararish are as much to be trusted as any others, and the Aleigat threat will always make them work" (Kitchener to the Sirdar, September 6). The Gararish are a small tribe occupying the east bank of the river from Ordeh (Dongola) to Old Dongola. They principally do a carrying trade and are of great importance. They are related to the Gararish of Wadi Halfa, and are to be found round most of the villages of the district, being allied to the Foggara and Ababdeh. They have always been loyal. The Aleigat are a small tribe on the left bank of the Nile, near Korosko.

3 Kitchener had already written to the Sirdar: "I feel it is rather hard

Do you intend returning? If so, when? You cannot control this work from the end of a telegraph wire. If you do not intend returning at once I request your permission to communicate with the Sirdar. Ahmed, Sala,[1] and the sheikhs refuse to take their men to Debbeh or Merawi, alleging it to be impossible at this time of year, and also the terms of their contract.

Always more anxious about the work than the workman, he replied:

You can certainly send any recommendation to the Sirdar. I thought you were already in communication with him. I have wired him—"Rundle reports that Ahmed and Sala decline to go to Merawi. I put this down a good deal to Sala's influence, as Ahmed had promised me to go. I recommended the Merawi movement very much as a test case, and had informed Ahmed that if he did not go I should not advise . . . taking him on. His refusal shows the uselessness. . . . I now recommend that the Fukara should be sent home after their month; that Sala be dismissed from the post of Vakil el Atmur, for which he has done nothing; and that Ahmed be recalled to Cairo and kept there until Sudan affairs are settled. . . . Should Mahmoud Bey also be sent to Cairo, it would be good." I certainly mean to return, but cannot say yet in how many days, as my movements depend on others.

He referred the question to the Sirdar:

Rundle wishes me to return to Korosko. The reason for my returning at once is to arrange the departure of the Fukara and see the Bisharin sheikhs. My work here [at Debbeh] is (1) getting this place into some state of de-

on Rundle leaving him so long with all my work on his hands. He has not complained. I am quite willing to return." (3.9.84.)

1 The culprits were not neutral Bisharin, but "friendly" Ababdeh, heavily subsidised and under contract!

fence. The Turkish soldiers won't work; I have recommended £300 to be expended on native labour. The Mudir agrees as to the requirements; the whole place requires cleaning out and the ditch in the sand revetting, with parapet-building and flank-defence-arranging. (2) I intended to start to-day on the reconnaissance of the road to Khartum. The Arabs are here to go with me. Everything points to this being the real way for the Expedition. The water-supply is doubtful: I intended to see about this. The road is safe; for three days' march it is quite smooth. Shall I go? I can get back before the arrival of the reply from Saleh of the Kababish. (3) My presence has an excellent influence on the natives. Please send me orders as soon as possible.

As a matter of fact, the intention to return to Korosko was never carried out; just as the Sirdar was about to order it, the Stewart tragedy supervened on growing troubles up the river, and Kitchener had to remain in the south.

The close friendship between Kitchener and Rundle—which dated from this year and lasted till the end—bore the stress of circumstances and the test of time, and was never disturbed by the plain speaking and writing which passed between them.

CHAPTER XII

On September 9 Lord Wolseley, who had been sent out from England to take command of the Khartum Expedition, arrived in Cairo, and two days later Colvile [1] from Dongola and Kitchener from Debbeh wired to him announcing a decisive reverse inflicted on the Mahdi's adherents at Korti by the Mudir; both the Mahdi's new Emir of Dongola and El Haddai, sheikh of the revolted Shaikiyeh, being killed.

Before the Mudir had scored his success the ever-increasing gravity of the situation on the Upper Nile had been emphasised by Kitchener in many messages. Even the Mudir's own Turkish garrison at Debbeh was not to be trusted. Kitchener, who for some weeks was living among them, still wearing Arab dress and scarcely distinguishable from a native, wrote: "The Turkish troops want looking after"; and again on August 13: "I am trying to make the Turks move, but have not yet succeeded"; and once more, on August 23: "I presume it is of no use for me to report the inefficiency of the troops here, as I should not recommend upsetting existing arrangements. Until our men come I have to work

1 Lieut.-Colonel, later Major-General Sir Henry, Colvile (1852–1907), Grenadier Guards, an Intelligence officer working on the western bank of the Nile; author of the official *History of the Sudan Campaign.*

by influence. I am trying to do my best, but the result is not satisfactory."

He at the same time made a pronouncement on the military capabilities of the Sudanese, which later on he was triumphantly to verify: "A good deal could be done and many men might be raised here who would make good soldiers, if you could send one or two good officers, with money, who speak Arabic."

The moves of the enemy were closely watched. El Haddai, the Shaikiyeh sheikh who had brought about the fall of Berber four months earlier, was now at Merawi. Kitchener had no doubt as to the importance of that place, which had been a valuable base for the rebels. Both to the Agency and to Wood he declares that it ought never to have been given up, and insists that it should be garrisoned. As soon as Debbeh has been made more defensible—he had found it "quite unprepared for attack, and very filthy"—he proposes to move to Merawi to form a post there and to prepare a position which, at the Mudir's request, he afterwards fortified; and he advocates the despatch from Debbeh to Merawi of 300 of the Mudir's Turkish soldiers.

Meanwhile he was able to learn that about 3000 men had come from Kordofan with the Mahdi's Emir, Mahmud Ibn Mohammed, and that 150 cavalry were within six hours of Debbeh, trying to raise the country. Failing in this, they appeared "to be in a funk." They had mistakenly counted on the Mudir's sympathy. The Emir, enraged on discovering the truth, wrote in abusive terms to the Mudir, who was to be smartly punished for his duplicity. Kitchener, determined not to be caught napping, wrote from Debbeh:

I have been hard at work on defences here, as at one time I rather expected an attack, for which this fort was quite unprepared. The Mudir is coming up with a large number of mounted men he has raised, and will be here in two days. Haddai has been fighting with a section of the Shaikiyeh [1] and worsted the loyal party whom I wished to assist. From Berber he got a few horses and some ammunition, but no men. The Mudir, two days ago, ordered a force to go from here [2] to Merawi. The Turkish soldiers do not like going, and are waiting for the Mudir. There is no news yet of Haddai's having formed a junction with the Emir from Kordofan, but unless we move he soon will, and there is good evidence that he desires to do so. I should like to prevent this by a movement to Ambukol or to near Merawi. For many reasons I should like to go with the Merawi force to see about the defence of the position there; I am awaiting the Sirdar's orders on the subject.

But the Sirdar was away, and Kitchener knew that time pressed. On August 25—before the graver developments of the Merawi-Korti situation—he had wired to the Agency: "I have asked the Sirdar. He missed my telegram at Assuan, but I shall hear from him from Korosko." No such message, however, came from Korosko or elsewhere, and Kitchener took French leave.

Meanwhile, however, the Mudir had won his battle

1 The Shaikiyeh are fellahs, not desert Arabs. They are under several sheikhs, and very numerous. One of El Haddai's worst followers escaped to the Hassaniyeh, who are allied to the Shaikiyeh. Shaikiyeh colonies exist at Metamma, and many are soldiers in the Sudan Army. They are generally turbulent and easily led into revolt. But there was always a strong loyal party among them. There is a blood feud between them and the Danagla Dongolawi." (Note by Kitchener.)

2 Wilson, visiting Debbeh some weeks later, on October 15, describes the garrison as composed of Turks, "the gaol-birds of Alexandria and the Levant," deported to the Sudan and formed into a corps by the Mudir. While he was up the river they seized the opportunity to commit various atrocities, specially against women. In December a number of complaints were made of their robbing and maltreating the Sawarab and other friendly tribes, thus seriously affecting Kitchener's work.

at Korti on September 10, and Kitchener, to strengthen the case for his own immediate departure for Merawi, seized upon the plea that the Mudir himself was going there and had begged that he would accompany him:

> The Mudir means to go to Merawi, but there is not the least danger or risk in the journey. What I mean by my observation on "intelligence" is that, when the Mudir has settled questions at Merawi by himself, we shall never know who is to be trusted. The Mudir's Vakil came with me on leave, and goes to rejoin him to-morrow. I would give a good deal to be allowed to accompany him. He says the reason the Mudir telegraphed for me was that he wanted me to lay out a fort at Merawi.

Kitchener, confidently "chancing" the Sirdar's approval, joined the Mudir at Ambukol, and the oddly assorted couple went on together to Merawi, whence the Mudir, to his intense chagrin, was on September 24 ordered back to Dongola by Nubar Pasha. Kitchener at Merawi not only collected and sifted every scrap of information, but gave practical effect to his belief in its military importance. His engineering skill was turned to good account in the laying out of a fort, which the Mudir's Vakil was to build later. It was here that, happening one day to see lying in disorder a large quantity of telegraph wire, which the enemy had torn down, Kitchener was told that the wire was wanted for removal elsewhere, but that no one knew how to move it. "I don't see any difficulty whatever," said Kitchener, and, taking a donkey standing by, he wrapped its body in sacking, and then wound the wire round the donkey. The animal offering no objection, a hundred other don-

keys were similarly loaded, and a transport difficulty was solved.

Apparently Kitchener had some misgiving as to whether his presence at Merawi involved any breach of discipline:

MERAWI, *September* 18.

I hope you think I did right [he explained to Wood] in coming with the Mudir. I could not stop at Ambukol alone, and it would have looked bad to go back. Also the Mudir wished me to go with him;[1] Gordon's messenger is on board and was starting back to him. Gordon intends sending an expedition to Berber. On their arrival at Berber Colonel Stewart with one steamer and 10 boats will be detached to come down the river to meet the expedition coming up. I have urged the Mudir to be as quick as possible, and he would have been two or three days more away if I had not been with him.

On the very date of this despatch was being enacted the tragedy which Kitchener had dreaded and had striven to avert. Stewart left Khartum in a steamer for Dongola a week earlier. He was the bearer of Gordon's diaries, cipher-books, and other valuable papers, and he was accompanied by the French and Greek Consuls and a party—numbering in all forty souls—which included several Greek merchants, a native crew, and some Arab women. The news of their departure from Khartum arrived on September 18, but it only reached Kitchener at Debbeh on his return from Merawi on the morning of the 22nd. On the way back from Merawi the Mudir had dawdled so intolerably that Kitchener, al-

1 The Mudir had been greatly dissatisfied a fortnight before at Kitchener's leaving him for Dongola: "He asserts that you [the Sirdar] intend me to stay with him, and that your order to me [to go to Dongola] means the whole Mudirate, not the town of Ordeh [Dongola] simply. I have told him that, if this is so, I will return to him in three or four days."

ready anxious about Stewart's projected journey, left his leisurely companion behind and hurried back to Debbeh, partly by river and partly in the saddle. Fully aware of the treacherous temper of the riverain tribes, he dashed off a letter to catch Stewart at Berber, urging him to quit the river at that point and take the desert route.[1] This letter never reached Stewart.

But Kitchener took other precautions. He strongly represented to Sir Redvers Buller, the Chief of Lord Wolseley's Staff, that some troops, or at least a steamer, should be despatched to Merawi—a measure which he believed would awe the enemy, and prevent an attack on Stewart either by the Monasir in the cataracts, or by the Hassaniyeh in the desert. He sent to the sheikhs of the Hassaniyeh, who were now astride of the desert route, and who seemed to be wavering between hostility and amity, exhorting them to come in. To the Monasir a stern warning was conveyed. Kitchener let it be known by native agents that dire penalties would avenge any molestation of the travellers.

On October 2 a runner reached the Mudir's deputy at Ambukol with the news that Stewart's steamer had been wrecked at Hebbeh, in the Monasir country, a little below the Abu Hamed bend. He was passed on to Debbeh to be interrogated by Kitchener, who wired the intelligence to Wolseley, and then sent the messenger to Suleiman Wad Gamr, sheikh of the

1 Sir Samuel Baker wrote to Kitchener on October 9: "The instant that I heard a few days ago that [Stewart's] steamer had struck a rock in passing through a cataract I was extremely anxious, as I knew the enemy would profit by his helpless position. It was foolish to attempt the descent of the river from Berber with a steamer, as there are some most dangerous places, which would be impassable without an experienced pilot. With enemies on the banks the danger would be magnified."

Monasir, with the grim threat, *"If any harm befall Stewart, for every hair of his head I will have a life."* The message did not reach the arch-assassin till after the murder had been perpetrated. But the subsequent experience of those implicated in the crime went to prove that the threat was not a vain one.

As yet it was not known—only rumoured—that the worst had happened; but on October 4 there came positive proof that, with four doubtful exceptions, all on board the steamer had been slaughtered. Kitchener still clung to the hope of saving these possible survivors and, fearing that Kordofan at best would be their fate, moved heaven and earth to be allowed to do anything that could be done, and what probably he alone could do, to effect their rescue. Buller forbade any such action; but Kitchener never ceased to urge that somebody should be sent and something attempted, nor for a moment relaxed his entreaties till the last ray of hope was extinguished.

APPENDIX I TO CHAPTER XII

Kitchener apparently thought—though the thought did not hinder his action—that his unconventional tenacity in pressing for permission to attempt the rescue of possible survivors of Stewart's party might be taken amiss. He therefore addressed an *apologia* to his immediate chief Wilson, accompanied by copies of all the telegrams on the subject which had passed between him and his superiors:

"DEBBEH.—In forwarding you the copies you desired of my telegrams on the disastrous result of the attempt to pass a steamer down the Nile from Khartum, I beg that, after reading them, you will give me your opinion on my action

in the matter. I feel it is very likely that it may form the subject of further remarks, and that criticisms may be passed on my conduct.

"I hope that in reading the telegrams you will remember I was all alone, without a soul to speak to or discuss the matter with. I assure you I was animated throughout with only one view—how to give help to Stewart, who was a friend of mine,[1] and the party that were with him. Many nights I have hardly slept at all with thinking over what could be done, and in the mornings I used to be so certain something would be done that it may have affected the tone of my telegrams, as it did in one case, viz. on October 6. I can only say I did my best according to my lights, and that I would not go through those eight days again—from the 2nd to the 10th of October—for any fortune.

"With these few remarks I leave the question of my conduct confidently in your hands."

APPENDIX II TO CHAPTER XII

The Government either could not, or would not, disclose any details of Stewart's fate to his relatives. Mr. Ralli, a close friend of the murdered officer, wrote to beg Kitchener —whom he did not then know—to give any information he possessed. The reply marks the beginning of a close acquaintance and continuous correspondence:

"GAKDUL, *January* 12, 1885.—I am very glad to give you any information I can about poor Stewart; but I am obliged to ask you to consider it as private, as I do not know what my seniors have, or wish to be, made known.

"I think it was September 23 that I first heard that Gordon was going to send Stewart down. I immediately sent off a special messenger to catch him at Berber, advising

1 Stewart and Kitchener were two of the four British Vice-Consuls whom Wilson, as Consul-General, had taken with him to Anatolia in 1879.

him to take the desert track from there, and warning him about the Robatah and Monasir tribes. I also sent a letter to Suleiman Wad Gamr to take care of a steamer that was coming and to help it in every way, and that if he did so he should be rewarded, but if not, for every hair of the heads of the occupants I would have a head from his family and tribe.

"I cannot now tell you all the telegrams I wrote on the subject, but Stewart was a dear friend of mine, and I did all I could to help him. When I come home I shall hope to be able to show them to you. Gordon evidently considered it more dangerous to remain in Khartum than to escape by the river. Seeing the Nile falling rapidly, and almost giving up all hope of a relief expedition coming or being in time, he thought it his duty to do his best to save the few Europeans remaining in Khartum. Stewart was sent by him to save these, and if possible to bring back relief to Khartum. There can be no doubt that Gordon had almost given up hope when the expedition started.

"Stewart's steamer came safely to the beginning of the fourth cataract—about 70 miles above Merawi—and there ran upon a rock below the island of Kanarett. The natives ran away at first, but were promised peace by Stewart and came back; they sent word to Suleiman Wad Gamr at Salamat, a village near. Unfortunately, close to the spot where the steamer was wrecked a blind man named Etman lived: this man is a fanatical follower of the Mahdi and a principal adviser of Suleiman Wad Gamr. Suleiman came to his house at once on hearing the news, and also collected his men together. He got hold of the *rais* or pilot of Stewart's steamer, a certain Mohammed (whom I know of and will catch), and found out that Stewart Pasha and the Consuls were on board. Suleiman and Etman promised the *rais* that if he would bring the white men unarmed to the house his life would be spared.

"Stewart spiked the gun on the steamer and threw some ammunition overboard; he then sent for camels to take him

to Merawi. Camels were brought and the soldiers disembarked in a small boat with their luggage. Stewart then asked for the owner of the camels, Suleiman Wad Gamr, to come and be paid for them as far as Merawi; the camels were then being loaded. Suleiman sent back word that he was the chief of that district, and that if Stewart would come and take coffee with him he would be glad to receive him, and that he would then take half the price of the camels, the remainder to be paid on their safe arrival at Merawi.

"From the account of what occurred I believe the house of Etman was quite close to where the camels were being loaded, just across a small patch of cultivation and some trees. The durra was thick and high, so that any number of men could be hid. Stewart started with the Consuls to go to the house, the *rais* having recommended him to do so. As they were starting, Suleiman sent word that his family were afraid if they came armed and with soldiers; the soldiers were sent back, and Stewart was the only one who had a small pistol or revolver. The party consisted of four —Stewart, Power, the French Consul, and Hassan the interpreter, a telegraph clerk from Khartum.

"They were well received by Suleiman and Etman, and had coffee and dates served. Suleiman then went out and his men almost immediately rushed in and filled the room, shouting, 'Surrender.' Stewart said, 'What do you want? Is it my pistol? Take it. I surrender.' When they had his pistol they began to cut down one of the Consuls. Stewart fought like a lion with his fists, trying to protect the Consuls. Hassan the interpreter caught hold of the blind man and used him as a shield; though severely wounded he escaped. The three Europeans were killed with swords in the small room at Etman's house.

"The party then sallied out and attacked the soldiers who were still loading the camels; they were surprised and attempted to get into the small boat, which was upset in the confusion; they were then killed as they came out of the

water; only one or two Monasir were killed by the soldiers before the boat was upset.

"The steamer was then looted, and Suleiman Wad Gamr paid 400 men a dollar-and-a-quarter each for their work. All documents he found in the steamer were sent with the prisoners to Berber. The prisoners were all black slaves or natives of Dongola province. Mohammed el Misir, the Emir of Berber, sent orders that the steamer should not be destroyed; so I believe it is still intact. The bodies were all, I believe, thrown into the Nile.

"The above details were obtained by my messengers from Hassan the interpreter, who was too badly wounded to go to Berber with the prisoners, and Hassan the fireman, who also remained behind when the other prisoners left for Berber. I have heard a rumour yesterday that Suleiman Wad Gamr has been killed by his own people; but I do not believe this, as it is probably spread to avert the revenge of the English soldiers. I am almost sorry I am not one of the party going up to Wadi Gamr, but you will see by this letter I am now attached to the column moving on Khartum. I sincerely hope Suleiman, Etman, and the *rais* will meet with their deserts.

"Stewart's effects will probably be recovered in Berber if they have been sent to the Mahdi. I hope I may be able to get hold of them. I will do all I can to get any of his things for his relatives. I served with Stewart in Anatolia, and saw more of him in Egypt; he was a dear friend of mine and the finest soldier I have ever met. It is terribly sad that he should have suffered such a fate, but he died trying to save others, and his name will live as a hero for ever.

"I must apologise for writing you such a scrawl, but General ——— is coming in in a few minutes, and I shall have no time after that to catch the post. If I can do anything more in the future for Stewart's relatives, pray let me know."

CHAPTER XIII

The organisation of the Khartum Relief Expedition brought all Egyptian officers under the supreme command of Lord Wolseley, Sir Evelyn Wood having been appointed General of the Lines of Communication. A question at once arose as to Kitchener's status, a Cairo paper announcing his retirement from the Egyptian Army. As this was the first that either he or the Army authorities had heard of the matter, they simultaneously wired to each other to know if the statement were true. Eventually—as late as November 6—an acceptable formula was drafted to the effect that he was to be "struck off Egyptian pay while lent to the Expedition."[1] Colonel Sir Charles Wilson, now his immediate superior as head of the Intelligence Department, at once notified him that he was attached as Intelligence Officer to Sir Herbert Stewart, at that time in charge at Dongola,[2] and appointed Deputy-Assistant-Adjutant and Quartermaster-General.

The murder at Hebbeh had a notable effect on British relations with the Mudir of Dongola. Lord Wolseley, who left Cairo on September 27 and arrived at Halfa on October 3, heard next day of the

1 He was employed in the Egyptian Army 21.2.83 to 20.2.85.

2 "The policy is to settle the Sudan question if possible without bloodshed, and to work as far as possible through the Mudir and his assistants. Colvile is to be attached to the Mudir when he advances to Merawi. You are to be attached to Sir H. Stewart when he moves up the River as Intelligence Officer."

disaster, and on October 6 instructed Sir Herbert Stewart to request the Mudir's immediate advance to Merawi with all available native troops. "I do not," he added, "wish any of our officers to accompany him"; but Herbert Stewart was specially enjoined to "inform Kitchener of the Mudir's movements."

The Mudir, however, was in no obliging mood. His dignity had been ruffled on his being ordered back from Merawi in September, and he kicked at being ordered to go there again in October. Wolseley, not unmoved by Kitchener's earnest representations, again telegraphed to Herbert Stewart on October 8:

> I think it very important that the Mudir should proceed to Merawi with all his available troops with the least possible delay, and that he should use every endeavour to obtain the release of any European prisoners that were with Stewart's party. . . . Inform Kitchener when the Mudir starts, and do your utmost civilly to get him to start as soon as possible. When Wilson reaches Dongola tell him to use his own discretion as to going on with, or after, the Mudir to Merawi.

The Mudir refused to budge, tried to make mischief, and contrived to bamboozle Sir Herbert Stewart, who wrote to Buller from Dongola on October 9:

> I believe that you would have had fuller and earlier information if Kitchener had remained here rather than at Debbeh. The Mudir gives me very plainly to understand that Kitchener receives only such information as he permits his Vakil to give him; and if this is so, then it might have been better to receive all one could from the Mudir himself.

No doubt this was what the Mudir wished the British officer to think. But the most elementary knowledge of Kitchener would preclude the notion of his being tied down to "receiving only such information" as he should be "permitted" to get! As it fell out, this same Vakil was detected in waylaying Kitchener's messengers, and trying to "pump" them for items of news to send to his master. So the Mudir's man was relying on Kitchener's sources, not Kitchener on his.

The Mudir's reception of Herbert Stewart was ill-mannered; his behaviour to Wilson, who arrived on October 11, was marked by studied insult. The orders given to his visitors were, on the one hand, to prod him on to Merawi, and on the other to humour him in every way. Stewart had been indignant, and Wilson boiled over, but both were powerless. As the truculent Turk was obdurate, Wilson on October 12 —still acting on instructions—started for Merawi without the Mudir, to try to get definite information as to the fate of the party from Khartum, and "to see what could be done." Reaching Debbeh on the 15th he paid Kitchener a visit, and pushed on to a point twenty miles above Merawi. Unable to glean any useful intelligence, he returned to Ambukol, whence he was peremptorily ordered back to Dongola, just as Kitchener had been forbidden to go beyond Debbeh. Wilson wrote home that it was rather hard to be expected to obtain information, and be ordered away from where it was best to be gained—a sentiment which Kitchener could not but share.

Having evaded obedience to Nubar's thrice-repeated orders, and flouted both Wolseley's written requests and personal representatives, the Mudir

now nerved himself to face the great man himself. Only at the last minute was he dissuaded from inflicting a personal slight on the British General by omitting to go out to meet him on his arrival at Dongola on November 3. As the distinguished visitor's first act was to confer on this fanatical Moslem the Knight Commandership of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, the ceremony may well have impressed him rather with the pliancy of British politicians than with the potency of the British Empire. The investiture, as Wilson commented, was, at any rate, "premature if not unnecessary."

From now till mid-December Kitchener kept Wilson closely informed as to the shifting phases of Sudan politics, largely coloured by the complexities of intertribal feuds and friendships. The fascination which the desert peoples exercised over him had already begun to work and never waned. It was a thing perhaps too subtle for analysis, but it was real—as real as the personal influence which he came to establish over them. His study of them was continuous, and his regard for them showed itself in his indignation against their oppressors. So, in long after-years, he criticised the body of Gordon College students as "not black enough"; he had wanted it to benefit the lads, not of Cairo, but of Kordofan.

In these few months of personal contact with Sudanese tribesmen he certainly achieved surprising results. Those whom he could not win to friendship he often weaned from enmity. His influence was quite independent of the subsidies. His docile and well-paid Ababdeh "waxed fat and kicked" almost as soon as his back was turned, but were brought to heel when he reappeared. When the Bisharin,

during his absence, wavered in their fidelity, they were steadied less by a good scolding administered by the deputy than by the expectation that the Chief would presently be coming back. The Kababish were nearly all pronouncedly pro-Mahdist.[1] Sheikh Saleh was circumvented and his tribe at least observed neutrality. The Sawarab and the Hauhauhin —united in a friendship of hatred for the Shaikiyeh —had been favourably inclined to Gordon and the British, and their loyalty[2] was diligently fostered. His hortatory letters fascinated the half-Mahdist Hassaniyeh, being just what they could understand and would accept. But his greatest success was with the Shaikiyeh, who had been actively hostile, their Sheikh El Haddai having been instrumental in the fall of Berber.

The Mudir just now sought to sow some tares amongst Kitchener's wheat:

The Sawarab and Hauhauhin [Kitchener told Wilson] are collecting camels to go to Wady Halfa. Saleh [sheikh of the Kababish] has opposed this. Are you aware that the Mudir made Saleh commander of all the Arabs? This has already made bad feeling with the Sawarab and Hauhauhin. I do not think he is working straight; he has not sent any news here as promised, and not supplied the men I wanted.[3]

1 "Are you up enough in Kababish politics, or the relations between their different clans, to write me some notes on them?" (Wilson to Kitchener, April 15, 1885). "Lord Wolseley asks you to report on Ababdeh politics" (*Idem,* November 30, 1884). "Let me know about the relations between the Ababdeh and the Bisharin" (*Idem,* April 3, 1885).

2 "The Hauhauhin occupy the country round the Debbeh-Khartum road as far as Bir Gummer. They are closely allied to the Sawarab. They levy a toll on each camel that passes. During the disturbances of El Haddai and the Shaikiyeh their sheikh remained loyal, while the tribesmen were either neutral or joined the rebels. They are now supposed to be all loyal" (Kitchener, *Report on the Tribes*).

3 "Now the Mudir has gone, never to return, cannot you find out something about him from the Sawarab or Hauhauhin sheikhs, especially how he managed that camel transaction at Korti, and stopped their carrying out

Jevzad Effendi[1] should wake him up properly. I have no power over him. . . . The sheikhs of Sawarab and Hauhauhin will be here to-day, so I shall wait to see them.

I have no doubt [Wilson replied] the Mudir has not been running straight. I know I can depend on you to work in the proper direction. . . . I asked Stewart to let you wear your native head-dress until you got a helmet, and he at once agreed. I think your work will be very important, and you will have a share of all that is going on. . . .

There was plenty of evidence as to the lack of chivalry on the part of the new Knight of St. Michael and St. George:

I think it is important that the Mudir should not leave Dongola. You will remember I advised this when you were here,[2] but I think it is just as well to put down some of the reasons, so that you may judge.

The Turkish soldiers here have become very discontented lately, so that one perhaps hears more about H.E. than he thinks. They have not been paid for three months.

I hear that the Mudir is antagonistic to the English—not, of course, that he is openly opposing them, but the fact of the people thinking that the anti-English movement is his work is sufficient. Of course, it is all based on religious grounds; we Christians are dogs, but are to be tolerated until we have bitten their adversary!

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their first contract?" (Wilson to Kitchener, April 15, 1885). Wolseley carried the Mudir with him to Korti, and he was ultimately packed off to Cairo. His double-dealing was a byword: "I am quite certain the Mudir knows what is going on, if he chose to tell" (Wilson to Kitchener, 28.11.84). Major A. E. (afterwards Major-General Sir Alfred) Turner wrote to Kitchener from Dongola, April 2, 1885: "The Mudir is under orders to go, but is in no hurry about it. The people are quite indifferent, and he had great difficulty in getting them to sign a petition to say that it would be very bad for the Mudirieh if he were to go, and that they will go too! Many of them took their donkeys and went out 'for the day,' to avoid signing."

1 The Mudir's Vakil or deputy, of whom Kitchener entertained a better opinion than Wilson had formed. Turner thought him the coming man.

2 *I.e.* three weeks earlier, October 15–16.

I should like to ask the Mudir why he put up the price of grain 75 per cent when the English came, and why there is all this difficulty in getting supplies. The clerk has been here three weeks now, and the total amount collected is 330 ardeb,[1] which I could have got the next market-day here. People have been to me to see if I would buy, and I have sent them to the Hakim el Khot. I do not know what is done at your post at Ambukol—perhaps the same story?

You know the Mudir by this time. If his views are not taken, he gets cross and obstructive. I do not think Lord Wolseley will care to follow the Mudir's advice, and let him work the advance in the same way as he has done the supplies.

The Mudir's nature is such that he would delight in the chance of saying, "I told you so," and he would contrive for us some little unpleasantnesses to remind us of the value of his aid, though I do not think he would dare to do anything big. Now I think the separation which would undoubtedly ensue had better not come off in the Shaikiyeh country[2]—that is the point of the whole argument. To prevent this, I should take his steamers—we already have the telegraph—and put the district under martial law. Politely tell him not to leave Dongola; *that* will upset all his plans!

The Vakil, Jevzad Effendi, whom you did not hit it off with, is really a good man. He is now much hurt at the Mudir promoting people over his head. His rank is Bimbashi (Major). If Lord Wolseley gave him the rank of Kaimakam, he would be entirely his.

Take care! The Mudir is exploiting the English, and filling his own pockets. Why should there be an English account and an Egyptian or London Government ditto? The whole ought to be English now.

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1 An ardeb = 5½ bushels.

2 Because Kitchener had been taking the hitherto hostile Shaikiyeh in hand, and to quarrel with the Mudir in their country would counteract these conciliatory efforts.

The Shaikiyeh are now very well disposed. I have said Moslem prayers with their sheikhs, and we are to be great friends.[1] They will bring 2000 men to pull through the cataracts, without pay, if necessary. (Kitchener to Wilson, 8.11.84.)

The Mudir's cup of wrongdoing was rapidly filling up, and Wolseley himself had to deal with him.

DEBBEH, *November* 21.—The sheikh of the Sawarab has again been bullied here by order of the Mudir. On leaving my (?) with messages he was taken and ordered to refund 50 dollars advanced to him some time back by the Mudir for camels. He wished to telegraph indignantly that the camels or the dollars were ready, but I persuaded him to pay, and then—on the pretext that the sum was not in medjidies—the money was with difficulty accepted. . . . It was remarked in my presence that this was known to have been done because the sheikh had brought me news. (Kitchener to Wilson.)

The incident annoyed Lord Wolseley excessively, and Wilson replied next day from Dongola:

Lord Wolseley came last night, and this morning I spoke to him about the Mudir's treatment of yourself and the Sawarab sheikh. The result is that the Mudir is to be spoken to pretty strongly by Zohrab[2] this afternoon, and told that he is not to interfere with our matters, or send angry telegrams to you or other English officers. I think Zohrab will do it well. I have given the Chief my views about the Mudir, and I need not tell you what they are. I hope you will not be troubled much more by him; but you may be quite sure I shall always support you, as I have full confidence in your discretion and knowledge of native life.

1 Khash'm-el-Mus, whom Kitchener later proposed as Mudir of Dongola, was a sheikh of the Shaikiyeh.

2 Colonel Zohrab Bey, A.D.C. to Lord Wolseley.

CHAPTER XIV

KITCHENER's delicate duty during the latter months of 1884 was to keep up communication with Gordon, whose rather fretful messages—more than excusable under the strain and sense of desolation—made difficulties a little more difficult. Gordon, for instance, curiously failed to make allowance for the risks and chances to which the messengers and missives were exposed. Thus (September 24) he complains that the only messengers who ever reach him are his own, whom he had sent out from Khartum; that the British officers "seem to grudge the least expense" in giving him information, or else that "they think it of no importance." He wonders that "men like Kitchener" should "not have more brains than to write merely 'I hope you are well,'" or "ask silly questions" such as Kitchener's to Stewart, "What can I do for you?"[1] He is vexed that Kitchener,

[1] The reference was, of course, to personal necessaries and comforts. Kitchener in after years told his nephew how he managed to send a message to Gordon asking what he wanted—meaning sponge, tooth-brush, and so on. The answer he received was a long tirade against the Government, asking for troops! Eventually Kitchener got a parcel of necessaries through to him, carefully wrapped up in the latest papers. Gordon, missing this fact, threw away the wrapping, complained of getting no news, and looked upon it as a piece of luck when a servant came to him two days later with the papers. "They are like gold," he wrote, and "gave us far more information than any of the letters. Did K. send them by accident or on purpose?"

while announcing the approaching Expedition, omitted to say by what route it was coming.

Kitchener, as a matter of fact, scraped up every grain of information and was at pains to send messages, especially the latest telegrams, not merely by Gordon's own agents on their return journey, but by messengers of his own—lists of whom, with names, dates, and sums paid them, are still extant.[1] It is true that many of these never reached their destination, just as it is true that Gordon's envoys frequently missed their mark; but it is quite certain that Kitchener's couriers safely delivered into Khartum both important messages and material comforts.

As to the route, he stated positively that the Expedition was coming, not by Suakin and Berber, but up the Nile to Debbeh, and he intimated the probable course of the last stage. More he could not say, since he was himself uninformed, and indeed the point had not yet been settled. Gordon's brother, reviewing the tragedy of Khartum, explicitly owned that "Kitchener did all in his power to get messengers into Khartum," and that from the time he went to Dongola he certainly "kept us acquainted with the position of affairs at Khartum in a manner most reliable."

Kitchener yielded to no one in his veneration—amounting to something little removed from hero-worship—for Gordon, and among his most treasured relics was Gordon's last letter to him, written two

1 (Wilson to Kitchener.) "DONGOLA, *April* 15, 1885.—Can you send me a list of the messengers sent by you and the Mudir to Khartum? I have a suspicion that one of the Mudir's men did not deliver the letters from Lord Wolseley to Gordon. At any rate it is curious that Gordon on December 13, 1884, should have addressed a letter to me in Dublin!"

months before the final catastrophe, and received at Korti on February 25:

KHARTUM, *November* 26, 1884.

MY DEAR KITCHENER—Yesterday I received your letter —September 16, Merawi—in which you send me a cipher. I wish you would write plainly and not in cipher, for it is quite unnecessary, inasmuch as, if captured, the Mahdi has the key. [*Slip cut out of Kitchener's letter and pasted on*:—"What do you most want?—H. H. KITCHENER.—Best regards to Stewart."] Well, I think I may say, "To get out of this, after nearly nine months' worry." I cannot make out about the *Abbas* and Stewart, but hope for the best.

The *Bordein*, which brought your post in, had a hot time of it. She had to run the gauntlet of six guns and no end of rifles for four miles. However, she got in all right, thank God: seven men wounded on board. I shall keep her here now. If you can, get a newspaper correspondent to thank the Secretary of the King of the Belgians for his Majesty's kind message. I should be obliged. [*Photographic slip pasted on*:—"Telegram. From Private Secretary of King of Belgians. The King sends expressions of deepest interest and of best wishes."]—Believe me, yours sincerely,

C. E. GORDON.

P. S.—I do not write any news, for I keep a daily journal, which I send to Chief of Staff. You will pardon me for my jokes about you and Chermside.

There will be no peace between me and Gladstone's Government—that is certain. Neither will I be cozened by any sweet words. Neither will I accept anything whatsoever from them. And I will not let them pay my expenses: I will get the King of the Belgians to do so; and I will never put foot in England again. I do not care what they may do, for I never would accept service with them again. Indeed, after my journal, it is a certainty they would never offer it.

If you would take the post up here of Governor-General, with a subsidy of £500,000 a year [1]—for you will get no taxes in—it would be well for the people, and you would have no difficulty that you could not master, D.V.

Several months afterwards, when sending the letter home to his father for safe keeping, Kitchener wrote:

KORTI, *March* 17, 1885.

I enclose a letter from Gordon to me, which came down in his steamer. It is the best reward that I shall get for a good many months' hard work; so please keep it most carefully for me. I feel that, now he is dead, the heart and soul of the Expedition is gone. The shock of the news was dreadful, and I can hardly realise it yet. I also send you a bond for money signed by Gordon; hundreds of thousands [worth] passed as money in Khartum, showing how much he was trusted by the people. I also send his decoration for the defence of Khartum.

1 Gordon writes to like effect in his Journal of the same date, except that the half-million annual subsidy is proposed for two years only.

CHAPTER XV

When the Nile Expedition was first organised, there was a pleasing fancy at home that a concentration of 3000 troops at Dongola would of itself suffice to scare the Mahdi away from Khartum—a comfortable anticipation which Wolseley did not share. On the contrary, he foresaw a crisis at Khartum which would necessitate the despatch of a force to consist chiefly of camel corps across the Bayuda desert—from a point near Debbeh to the neighbourhood of Metemma. On October 19, therefore, he made arrangements to advance mounted troops to Debbeh. A month later this decision was revised in favour of a concentration of 8000 men at Korti. Eventually the total number of troops was increased to 9500, of which 6000 infantry were brought up to Korti.

Wolseley's letter to Gordon of November 7, announcing the approach of the Expedition, was written in duplicate, one copy being sent from Merawi by Colvile, and the other from Debbeh by Kitchener. The latter was meanwhile busy securing the safety of the stores now in course of accumulation. His advice to Herbert Stewart (November 20) was that these should be collected at Debbeh near the river-bank, at a point easy for trans-shipment, and that men should be detailed to guard them at night. In Wilson's opinion, "now was the Mahdi's chance if

he purposed to do anything against Lord Wolseley's army," and he wrote to Kitchener on November 28 that he was a little anxious about a possible raid:

The stores at Debbeh are a great temptation to any Arabs out on the war-path, and I am therefore very glad that 200 men are going up [from Dongola] to-morrow. . . . If you have any definite news of the advance of a raiding party, you had better let Stewart know, as well as sending a telegram here.

On November 28 Wolseley asked:

Do you think that the stores are in any danger from raids by the enemy? Are they suffering from white ants? Would it be advisable to construct a small redoubt for their protection? Could you have it made, or would you advise sending 100 or 200 men from here for its protection? It is desirable to avoid doing so if possible, as I want, not to move the force by driblets, but to send on, as soon as I can, an imposing force that will have a good political effect on the tribes. Please state your opinion fully on these matters.

Four days later Wolseley telegraphed:

Design a small redoubt for the Sussex detachment, and put up the profiles before you leave Debbeh. After you have seen this work fairly started you are to take up your quarters at Ambukol, taking with you a good English telegraph clerk. When at Ambukol make a sketch [1] on a large scale of the ground from Ambukol to Korti, and report on the best place for landing stores and erecting a redoubt for 500 men, to form a base of the force marching from the river to Metemma. The move forward will probably begin in five or six days. You can tell the sheikhs of the Sawarab and Hauhauhin that Lord Wolseley will write to them when he goes up the river.

1 Kitchener's well-worn sketch-map of the Nile is still extant.

Kitchener, thinking now to get on good terms with the Hassaniyeh, who held the Berber-Merawi road,[1] wired to Headquarters on November 30:

I beg to suggest that the following letter be sent to the Hassaniyeh sheikhs:—(After compliments) "The Commander of the English has heard from Sheikh Wad-el-Khen and Sheikh Khalifa that you are anxious to receive peace, and to leave the service of the impostor Ahmed Mohammed. If this is true, you need not fear, as the English are come to punish only those who are rebels to Gordon and desire his life. If you want provisions and help, send your Vakil to Ambukol to see my Vakil there."

Please let me know soon if this is approved, as my men have orders to get a messenger who will be trustworthy and keep his eyes open. I also want to send in two days to Jebel Harazi.

The reply was to the effect that—though Lord Wolseley did not wish a messenger to be sent to the Hassaniyeh just yet, and could not promise them provisions—permission was given to send to Jebel Harazi for news.

Herbert Stewart was now on the move, and Kitchener, as a πάρεργον to his Intelligence work, had to find a camping-place for him:

KABUDI, *December* 12, 1884.

We reach Debbeh on the 13th, and the neighbourhood of Korti on the 15th. Like a good fellow, look out for a good site for us for a camp, as near the branch road to Metemma shown on your map as you think feasible. We want shade, if possible, for Headquarters and ourselves, etc.; also good position for field hospital which we can protect by a redoubt. If you have nothing better to do, I shall ask you to come on a bit ahead with me to Korti on the 15th; or, if you are

1 Another section lay south of Khartum.

there, look out for me fairly early. Very many thanks for copy of your report.

On December 16 Wolseley established his Headquarters at Korti and proceeded to make his dispositions. The bulk of his army, under Earle, was still to proceed by water. But information of Khartum being at starving-point was just to hand, and the only hope of salvation lay in the mounted troops. To Herbert Stewart was entrusted the command of the column which should cross the desert, and Kitchener was accredited to him "to help him with the tribes." The column had to be self-supporting, and as camels were insufficient for the whole force to cross the desert in a single trip, an intermediate depot had to be formed. For this Kitchener recommended Gakdul, half-way between Korti and Metemma, where there was a plentiful supply of good water.

Kitchener with six Arab scouts rode just ahead of the Desert Column, which left Korti on December 30 and reached Gakdul on January 2, 1885, Herbert Stewart with a convoy of unloaded camels starting later the same day on the return journey to Korti to fetch the further supplies. Kitchener remained at Gakdul—and to some purpose, for at the head of a small party he succeeded in capturing two camel convoys with substantial loads of grain and flour.

Herbert Stewart returned to Gakdul on January 12, and on the 14th led out the column to Metemma, leaving only a very small garrison at Gakdul, and instructing Kitchener—to the latter's intense disappointment—to return to Korti. At Abu Klea on

the 17th was fought an engagement which drew from von Moltke the remark that the British Expedition was comprised not of soldiers but of heroes. Two days later, fighting his way to the Nile near Metemma, Herbert Stewart was shot, and Wilson as senior officer assumed command of the column. Before dawn on the 21st, an officer, who had missed his way in the desert, but had made up for the aberration by riding 96 miles in 29 hours, arrived at Korti and delivered Wilson's despatch.

The news of Herbert Stewart's mortal wound was a terrible tug at Wolseley's heart-strings. Stewart was the apple of his eye. He had pronounced him to be "a born leader of cavalry," and was attached to him by ties of the most affectionate friendship.

It was at once decided that Buller—his place as Chief of the Staff being filled by Wood—should assume command of the column, which was now at El Gubat on the river, and Kitchener was detailed to accompany him. Buller took with him the Royal Irish Regiment, who pluckily agreed to foot it across the desert. On leaving Korti on January 29 he made four night marches to Gakdul, arrived at El Gubat on February 11, and found the handful of British troops in a precarious position—hampered by wounded and an ever-increasing number of sick, disheartened by the fall of Khartum—the news of which reached Buller and Kitchener at Gakdul—and the death of Gordon, and within striking distance of large Mahdist hordes. Buller had thought that the taking of Metemma would be a comparatively easy job, and the grave news of the enemy's increased numbers and proximity reported by Lieutenant Willoughby Verner, Rifle Brigade—who had replaced Sir Charles

Wilson as Intelligence Officer—did little to change his mind.

Verner had half feared lest Kitchener should imagine he had arranged to get himself detailed to go forward from Gakdul under Wilson when Kitchener had been ordered to return to Lord Wolseley at Korti; but a hearty word of greeting dispelled any anxiety on that score, and the two joined their bivouacs. Kitchener was at once immersed in the notes and news derived from natives who had come in from Khartum; he was quick to seize the gravity of the position; everything he heard and saw confirmed his belief that the Expedition had been "too late" all along; that the Mahdi could and would have entered Khartum as soon as our troops neared their goal, and that meanwhile he was sending forces along both banks; so that to attack or hold Metemma, or even to remain at Gubat, was a far more difficult matter than Buller or the authorities at Korti had imagined it to be. His grasp of the whole subject was in marked contrast to a good deal of prevailing ignorance as to the factors governing the military situation, and he could not refrain from expressing an opinion as to plans loosely made at home and directions too lightly given.

Late in the afternoon of the 12th a spy came in from Khartum with recent and precise information that the Mahdi had issued instructions for his men—now only two days distant—to surround the British force and cut off its retreat, and Buller then quickly decided that it was high time to be off. The withdrawal from El Gubat, which should have been carried out in darkness, silence, and secrecy, was not

effected till just before dawn on the 14th, and was preceded by much noise and many bonfires. Orders had been issued to destroy all stores which the attenuated transport could not carry; the men after consuming as much food as they could assimilate, threw a large amount of stuff into the Nile, and burnt the rest—the whole riverside being lit up. Happily the column, with the Royal Irish Regiment as rearguard, was able to take its departure unmolested and, late that evening, to reach Abu Klea.[1] The position was not an ideal one, as it lay in a sandy hollow in mid-desert, near some twenty wells, or water-holes, averaging about 20 feet deep and difficult to keep open. The 23 miles of waterless desert was the chief defence, and Kitchener advised that if the wells could be defended and the camp strengthened the Mahdists could be kept at bay for some time. The defences were a little sketchy, and he urged that in a night attack some of the small earthworks might easily fire into one another. Under his instructions the defences were improved; and none too soon, for two days later the Dervishes established themselves on the surrounding hills, kept up a brisk fire, and even succeeded in making a series of trenches whence they peppered away in perfect security, as the hard stony ground rendered it impossible to check the range for Martini-Henry rifles. They opened fire on the little crowded camp with

1 Kitchener was at this time ordered to draw up a Report on the Fall of Khartum—a work which involved the examination of many witnesses, the weighing and valuation of much evidence, and the piecing together of various narratives. It was not completed till August 18, 1885, but was at once adopted as the official account, being printed as Appendix 47 to Colvile's *History of the Sudan Campaign*: see the Appendix to this Chapter. It is a noticeable feature that it defends Wilson, and exonerates him from the blame unjustly cast upon him.

a gun brought up on camel-back, which was, however, quickly knocked out by our 7-pounders. Then Major Wardrop, Wolseley's aide-de-camp, who had been lent to Buller, cleverly disposed of a small party in the manner of a stage army, and persuaded the Dervishes that an attack in force was imminent, a ruse which resulted in their withdrawal.

At the end of this running fight Kitchener returned to his bivouac to find that not only had the tree under which he sheltered been, by order, blown down with gun-cotton, but that some miscreant had looted his kit. Among his few possessions was a rough portable table, consisting of a wooden slab and a folding trestle. This was the only article of furniture in the force, and Buller frequently borrowed it and sat at it to write his reports to Lord Wolseley. The loss of the table provoked one of his rare outbursts of anger, especially as he was pretty certain who was the culprit. He rose in his wrath, strode across to a neighbouring bivouac, and immediately nailed his man. The latter tried to brazen it out, and made remarks about "fellows abandoning their kits" and of his "risking his life to retrieve them." Kitchener's reply is not recorded; but he recovered his table.

On the afternoon of the 17th news was received of the River Column's successful action at Kirbekan on the 10th, but the despatch conveying this—written on the assumption that Buller would still be found in Metemma—contained no instructions as to the force remaining at or retiring from Abu Klea. Not the least of Wolseley's difficulties was to communicate with the Desert Column, and his orders—dependent as they were on Downing Street policy—often overlapped and contradicted one another.

Thus Buller, who had left Korti with distinct orders for his course of procedure, was five days later desired to remain at Gakdul. On the evening of the same day this order was changed, and he was told to go to El Gubat. On the following morning these orders were altered and extended. On the 10th elaborate instructions were sent to him that the Government had decided he was to take Metemma at all costs and join with Earle on the river. These orders were received after Buller had evacuated Gubat, and he was wholly unable to act on them. Two days later he is ordered to advance from Abu Klea on Berber; five days afterwards he is instructed to take the mounted forces to Merawi, and the next afternoon he is finally directed to return to Korti.

The whole position at Abu Klea was beset with doubts and difficulties peculiarly trying to Buller's dogged temperament. On February 23 the vedettes reported the advance from Metemma of a strong detachment of Dervishes, which Kitchener estimated at about 8000 men. As, however, they had only about thirty camels, they could not have brought up many guns or much water, and therefore they would certainly attack the camp in force in order to get our water-supply. Buller had now to swallow a bitter pill; for the Medical Officer in charge reported that it would be quite impossible, should a serious fight occur, for the transport to withdraw any more wounded. The General still lingered and hesitated, but circumstances were too strong for him, and a withdrawal that night had become inevitable.

Evacuation being decided upon, the chief question was how to avoid pursuit along the 55 miles of waterless desert which constituted the line of march.

Kitchener in the Arabian desert had experienced the horror of a water panic, and begged that during the march the men should never be led to suspect any real shortage. Yet at all costs the Dervish pursuit must be hampered or arrested by lack of water, and Kitchener impressed on his brother-officers the paramount necessity of filling in the wells—a course which Buller at first flatly refused to sanction. Officer after officer approached him in vain, but at last Wardrop wrung from the General an unwilling consent to fill in the "principal well." Kitchener instantly rose to the situation. Turning to his colleagues he said, "Verner, you know the biggest well; get some men at once and fill it in. Wardrop, go along and fill in the biggest well you can find. I'll go and see about the rest."

The march of the column to Gakdul, not the least depressing part of a heart-breaking withdrawal, began that night, and was continued with short halts until the wells were reached on February 26. The day before, a young special service officer, Lieutenant Barttelot, was found lying across the path, well ahead of the column. Questioned as to why he was there, he coolly remarked that he was "dead sick at Buller's slow pace" and had gone on in front "so as to get a good sleep," being sure that the column would stumble across him! Kitchener paid tribute to his coolness, but said, "He is just the sort of man our people are sure to select some day to command a native contingent; and ten to one, if he gets such a job, his men will murder him." A few years later this bit of character-reading was tragically fulfilled to the letter in the course of Stanley's expedition for the relief of Emin Pasha.

Verner's diary contains an entry that, during this march, at the halt for breakfast, Kitchener produced a sheep originally presented to Buller by a friendly sheikh but abandoned by the General's cook. Kitchener had secured the animal and kept it for an emergency, and was able to remark that "few people had ever had fresh kidneys for breakfast in the middle of the Bayuda desert!"

The Desert Column was broken up at Gakdul Wells and, exhausted and almost shoeless, hobbled its way back piecemeal to Korti, where all the troops were ordered to proceed to summer quarters, Kitchener being returned for Intelligence work to his former home at Debbeh.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER XV

NOTES ON THE FALL OF KHARTUM

The last accurate information received about Khartum is contained in General Gordon's Diary and dated December 14, 1884.

State on Dec. 14. The state of the town was then very critical, and General Gordon states "the town may fall in ten days."

Omdurman. The fort of Omdurman had been cut off from communication with Khartum since November 3; it was at that date provisioned for 1½ months, and the commandant, Farag Allah Bey, had requested further supplies of ammunition.

The garrison may therefore be considered to have been in great difficulties for food and necessaries after December 20.

General Gordon had so weakened himself by sending away five steamers, four to meet the English expedition and one with Colonel Stewart, that he found it impossible to check

the Arabs on the White Nile and therefore to keep open communication with the fort of Omdurman.

According to General Gordon's statement, there were in the stores at Khartum, on December 14, 83,525 okes of biscuit and 546 ardebs of dhourra. From the almost weekly statement of the amounts in store, it is calculated that although General Gordon was able to reduce considerably the issue of dhourra the biscuit ration of the troops had not been reduced up to December 14. The amount in store would represent approximately 18 days' rations for the garrison alone—Gordon had already on November 22 found it necessary to issue 9600 lbs. of biscuit to the poor, and he then says, "I am determined if the town does fall the Mahdi shall find precious little to eat in it."

Provisions, Khartum.

There is little doubt that as the siege progressed it was found necessary to issue considerable amounts of provisions to the poorer native inhabitants of Khartum. It may therefore be considered that even on reduced rations the supply in store must have been almost, if not quite, exhausted about January 1, 1885.

The town was then closely encircled by the rebels, who doubtless increased the intensity of their attack as they approached nearer and nearer to the works.

The Mahdi was fully aware, from deserters, of the straits to which the garrison were reduced for want of food; and it was his intention that the town should fall into his hands without fighting, being obliged by famine to surrender.

About January 6 General Gordon, seeing that the garrison were reduced to great want for food, and that existence for many of the inhabitants was almost impossible, issued a proclamation, offering to any of the inhabitants who liked free permission to leave the town and go to the Mahdi. Great numbers availed themselves of this permission, and General Gordon wrote letters to the Mahdi requesting him to protect and feed these poor Muslim people as he had done for the last 9 months.

Proclamation by General Gordon.

Population.

It has been estimated that only about 14,000 remained in the town out of the total of 34,000 inhabitants, the number obtained by a census of the town in September.

General Gordon kept heart in the garrison by proclamations announcing the near approach of the English relief expedition, and praising them for the resistance they had made, as well as by the example of his unshaken determination never to surrender the town to the rebels.

Fall of Omdurman.

It appears probable, though the precise date cannot be exactly verified, that the fort of Omdurman fell into the hands of the rebels on or about January 13. The garrison were not injured, and Farag Allah Bey, the commander, was well treated in the rebel camp, as an inducement for any waverers in the Khartum garrison to join the Mahdi's cause.

The fall of Omdurman must have been a great blow to the garrison of Khartum, who thus lost their only position on the west bank of the White Nile. The Arabs were able then, by the construction of batteries along the river-bank, to entirely close the White Nile to Gordon's steamers. Having accomplished this they could establish ferries on the White Nile (south of Khartum), and have constant and rapid communication from Omdurman village and camp to their positions along the south front.

Sortie of Jan. 18.

About January 18, the rebel works having approached the south front, a sortie was made by the troops which led to desperate fighting; about 200 of the garrison were killed, and although large numbers of the rebels were said to have been slain, it does not appear that any great or permanent advantage was obtained by the besieged garrison. On the return of the troops to Khartum, after this sortie, General Gordon personally addressed them, praising them for the splendid resistance they had made up to that time, and urging them still to do their utmost to hold out as relief was near; indeed that the English might arrive any day and all would then be well.

The state of the garrison was then desperate from want of food, all the donkeys, cats, rats, etc., had been eaten; a small ration of gum was issued daily to the troops, and a sort of bread was made from pounded palm-tree fibres. Gordon held several councils of the leading inhabitants, and on one occasion had the town most rigorously searched for provisions—the result, however, was very poor, only yielding 4 ardebs of grain through the whole town; this was issued to the troops.

State of garrison.

Gordon continually visited the posts and personally encouraged the soldiers to stand firm; it was said during this period that he never slept. On January 20 the news of the defeat of the Mahdi's picked troops at Abu Klea created consternation in the Mahdi's camp. A council of the leaders was held, and it is said a considerable amount of resistance to the Mahdi's will, and want of discipline, was shown. On the 22nd the news of the arrival of the English on the Nile at Metamma, which was thought to have been taken, led the Mahdi to decide to make at once a desperate attack upon Khartum, before reinforcements could enter the town. It is probable that next day the Mahdi sent letters to Farag Pasha commanding the black troops, who had been previously in communication with him, offering terms for the surrender of the town and stating that the English had been defeated on the Nile. Rumours were also prevalent in Khartum of the fighting at Abu Klea and the arrival of the English at Metamma.

News of battle at Abu Klea.

It has been said that helmets were exposed, by the Mahdi's troops, in front of their works to induce the garrison to believe that the English had been defeated, but this has been distinctly denied by some who could hardly have failed to observe anything of the sort.

On the 23rd General Gordon had a stormy interview with Farag Pasha. An eye-witness states that it was owing to Gordon having passed a fort on the White Nile, which was under Farag Pasha's charge, and found to be inadequately

protected. Gordon is said to have struck Farag Pasha on this occasion. It seems probable to me that at this interview Farag Pasha proposed to Gordon to surrender the town, and stated the terms the Mahdi had offered, declaring in his opinion that they should be accepted. Farag Pasha left the palace in a great rage, refusing the repeated attempts of other officers to effect a reconciliation between him and Gordon.

Jan. 23, General Gordon's interview with Farag Pasha.

On the following day General Gordon held a council of the notables at the palace. The question of the surrender of the town was then discussed, and General Gordon declared whatever the council decided he would never surrender the town. I think it very probable that on this occasion General Gordon brought Farag Pasha's action and proposals before the council; and it appears that some in the council were of Farag Pasha's opinion that the town could resist no longer, and should be surrendered on the terms offered by the Mahdi. General Gordon would not, however, listen to this proposal.

Jan. 24, council of notables.

On the 25th Gordon was slightly ill, and as it was Sunday he did not appear in public. He had, however, several interviews with leading men of the town and evidently knew that the end was near. It has been said that Gordon went out in the evening, and crossed the river to Tuti Island on board the *Ismailia*, to settle some dispute amongst the garrison there. This statement has not been verified by other witnesses, but owing to it the rumour subsequently arose amongst the black troops in Omdurman that Gordon had escaped that night on board the *Ismailia*. The facts, however, that both steamers were captured by the rebels, that the *Ismailia* was afterwards used by Mohammed Ahmed when he visited Khartum, and the very full and complete evidence that General Gordon was killed at or near the palace, entirely dispels any doubt on the matter. If he crossed the river to Tuti, there is no doubt he returned later to his palace in Khartum.

Jan. 25.

On the night of the 25th many of the famished troops left their posts on the fortifications in search of food in the town. Some of the troops were also too weak, from want of nourishment, to go to their posts. This state of things was known in the town and caused some alarm; many of the principal inhabitants armed themselves and their slaves, and went to the fortifications in place of the soldiers. This was not an unusual occurrence, only on this night more of the inhabitants went as volunteers than they had done on previous occasions.

At about 3.30 A.M. on the morning of Monday the 26th a determined attack was made by the rebels on the south front. The principal points of attack were, the Boori Gate, at the extreme east end of the line of defence on the Blue Nile; and the Mesalamieh Gate on the west side near the White Nile. The defence of the former post held out against the attack, but at the Mesalamieh Gate the rebels, having filled the ditch with bundles of straw, brushwood, beds, etc., brought up in their arms, penetrated the fortifications, led by their Emir, Wad-el-Nejumi. The defenders of the Boori Gate, seeing the rebels inside the fortifications in their rear, retired, and the town was then at the mercy of the rebels.

Jan. 26, fall of town.

General Gordon had a complete system of telegraphic communication with all the posts along the line of fortifications, and there must have been great irregularity in the telegraph stations to account for his being left entirely unwarned of the attack and entry of the rebels. Doubtless Farag Pasha was responsible, to some extent, for this.

Farag Pasha has been very generally accused of having either opened the gates of Khartum himself, or to have connived at the entrance of the rebels, but this has been distinctly denied by Abdullah Bey Ismail, who commanded a battalion of irregular troops, at the fall of the town; as well as by about 30 refugee soldiers, who lately escaped, and came in during the last days of the English occupation of Dongola. The accusa-

Farag Pasha's conduct.

tions of treachery have all been vague, and are, to my mind, the outcome of mere supposition.

Hassan Bey Bahnasawy, who commanded at the Mesalamieh Gate, certainly did not make a proper defence and failed to warn General Gordon of the danger the town was in. He afterwards appears to have taken a commission under the Mahdi and to have gone to Kordofan with the Emir Abu Anga.

In my opinion, Khartum fell from sudden assault when the garrison were too exhausted by privations to make proper resistance.

Massacre.

Having entered the town, the rebels rushed through the streets, shouting and murdering every one they met; thus increasing the panic and destroying any opposition.

Death of General Gordon.

It is difficult, from the confused accounts, to make out exactly how General Gordon was killed. All the evidence tends to prove it happened at, or near, the palace, where his body was subsequently seen by several witnesses. It appears that there was one company of black troops in the palace besides General Gordon's cavasses; some resistance was made when the rebels appeared, but I think this was after General Gordon had left the palace. The only account, by a person claiming to be an eye-witness, of the scene of General Gordon's death relates: "On hearing the noise, I got my master's donkey and went with him to the palace; we met Gordon Pasha at the outer door of the palace. Mohammed Bey Mustafa, with my master, Ibrahim Bey Rushdi, and about 20 cavasses then went with Gordon towards the house of the Austrian Consul Hansell, near the church, when we met some rebels in an open place near the outer gate of the palace. Gordon Pasha was walking in front leading the party. The rebels fired a volley and Gordon was killed at once; nine of the cavasses, Ibrahim Bey Rushdi, and Mohammed Bey Mustafa were killed, the rest ran away."

A large number of witnesses state Gordon was killed near

the gate of the palace, and various accounts have been related from hearsay of the exact manner in which he met his end. Several reliable witnesses saw, and recognised, Gordon's body at the gate of the palace; one describes it as being dressed in light clothes.

The Sudan custom of beheading and exposing the heads of adversaries slain in battle was apparently carried out, as was done by the Mudir of Dongola after the battle at Korti. The Bagara savages seem to have had some doubt which was Gordon's body, and great confusion occurred in the Mahdi's camp at Omdurman, where the heads were exposed, as to which was Gordon's head; some recognising, others denying the identity of Gordon's head. One apparently reliable witness relates that he saw the rebels cut off Gordon's head at the palace gate after the town was in their hands.

The massacre in the town lasted some six hours, and about 4000 persons at least were killed. The black troops were spared, except those who resisted at the Boori Gate and elsewhere; large numbers of the townspeople and slaves were killed and wounded. The Bashi Bazouks and white regulars, numbering 3327, and the Shaikiyeh irregulars, numbering 2330, were mostly all killed in cold blood after they had surrendered and been disarmed.

Numbers killed.

Consul Hansell was killed in his own house. Consul Nicola, a doctor, and Ibrahim Bey Fauzi, who was Gordon's secretary, were taken prisoners; the latter was wounded.

At about 10 A.M. the Mahdi sent over orders to stop the massacre, which then ceased. The rebels fell to looting the town, and ordered all the inhabitants out of it; they were searched at the gate as they passed, and were taken over to Omdurman, where the women were distributed as slaves amongst the rebel chiefs. The men, after being kept as prisoners, under a guard, for three days, were stripped, and allowed to get their living as best they could.

It has been stated that the Mahdi was angry when he heard of General Gordon's death; but though he may have

simulated such a feeling on account of the black troops, there is very little doubt in my opinion that had he expressed the wish Gordon would not have been killed.

Mahdi's wishes as to General Gordon.

The presence of Gordon as a prisoner in his camp would have been a source of great danger to the Mahdi, for the black troops from Kordofan and Khartum all loved and venerated Gordon, and many other influential men knew him to be a wonderfully good man.

The want of discipline in the Mahdi's camp made it dangerous for him to keep a man prisoner whom all the black troops liked better than himself, and in favour of whom, on a revulsion of feeling, a successful revolt might take place in his own camp. Moreover, if Gordon was dead, he calculated the English would retire and leave him in peace.

The Mahdi had promised his followers as much gold and silver as they could carry when Khartum fell, and immense disappointment was expressed at the failure to find the government treasury.

Search for treasure.

Three days after the fall of the town Farag Pasha was brought up to show where the Government money was hid. As he was naturally unable to do this owing to there not being any, he was killed in the public market-place at Omdurman.

Fate of Farag Pasha.

Many others were put to torture to disclose where their wealth was hid, with varying results.

On the third day after the fall of Khartum many of the prisoners saw Sir Charles Wilson's steamers off Tuti Island with the English on board—some were present in the batteries at Omdurman when the rebels opened fire on the steamers.

The number of white prisoners in the Mahdi's camp has been variously stated; a Greek, escaped from Khartum, reports when the place fell there were 45 Greeks, 5 Greek women, 1 Jewess, 6 European nuns, and 2 priests; of these, 34 Greeks were

White prisoners in Khartum.

murdered. The survivors are all at liberty but in extreme poverty.

Abdullah Bey Ismail relates that "all the European ladies are at Omdurman living in a zariba, where they form a little colony, guarded by the European men. They earn a meagre sustenance by sewing, washing, etc. Not a single one was taken by the dervishes; they all wear moslem dress."

A letter from the Mahdi was received relative to the white prisoners, who he declared preferred to remain with him. The document bears 96 signatures of Europeans; but some of them are undoubtedly spurious, as that of Father Singi Bouomi who has since escaped from El Obeid, never having been at Khartum.

A large number of the Bagara Arabs left the Mahdi shortly after the fall of Khartum, much disgusted at their failure to obtain a larger amount of loot. On the Mahdi attempting to bring them back by force, they joined the party in Kordofan who are now fighting against the Mahdi's cause.

The memorable siege of Khartum lasted 317 days, and it is not too much to say that such a noble resistance was due to the indomitable resolution and resource of one Englishman.

Never was a garrison so nearly rescued, never was a Commander so sincerely lamented.

H. H. KITCHENER,
Major.

In compiling this memorandum Major Kitchener has had at his disposal all the information in this Department, and I believe it is as accurate a statement of what took place as can be made out.

A. S. CAMERON,
Colonel.

INTELLIGENCE BRANCH,
QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPT.,
August 18, 1885.

CHAPTER XVI

Kitchener was now entrusted by Wolseley with a duty distinct from that assigned to other Intelligence officers, who were "chiefly to confine their efforts to watching the local markets and picking up the local gossip of their immediate districts." He was to "visit the sheikhs of the Kababish, Sawarab, and Hauhauhin frequently," to persuade them to "organise a system of native posts," and to use "every means in his power to make himself as closely acquainted as possible with what goes on in the desert and with the people living in it."

Early in April Kitchener, when reporting the condition of Kordofan, was the first to suggest what would be the sequel to our giving up Dongola:

> I think there is no doubt that Kordofan is again in a state of revolt, and that the Mahdi's Emir has very little power over the turbulent tribes. I expect, however, that Abu Anga and the black troops whom the Mahdi took in Khartum, and who are now marching on Kordofan, will bring the country under the Mahdi's influence again, as the tribes in revolt have no great leader to gather round and fight for.
>
> The principal cause of the present revolt is, I believe, the stoppage of all trade, and the rising is fostered by merchants from the West as far as Timbuktu, who are now feeling the effects of Mahdism on their pockets. All the former merchants of Kordofan have thrown in their lot with the rising, except Elias Pasha, who has gone to Omdurman by order of the Mahdi.

Darfur is now ruled by its own Sultan, almost without opposition from the followers of the Mahdi. I think it would be a good thing if relations could be opened with Darfur.

I do not think the Mahdi will be able to draw upon Kordofan in future, but will have to depend on the river tribes to fight for him. This will greatly reduce his power, and if steamers are employed freely when the river rises, the country may be recovered.

I expect there will be almost a famine in the country this year, and I do not think the river tribes are anything like so warlike as the Kordofan Arabs, who are always fighting among themselves. They will probably therefore be half-hearted and anxious for peace by the time the Nile rises. It is of course impossible to foresee what the future English policy in the Sudan will be. I think it would add greatly to the power and prestige of the Mahdi if we gave up the Dongola and Shaikiyeh countries, and would greatly hasten a descent on Egypt by any fanatical followers of the Mahdi, who would then believe that everything would give way before them. It would also hand over a large supply of dates and provisions, as well as the money that we have poured into this province.

The great question—if England intends to retire, or, which amounts to the same thing, does not mean to go on next autumn—is how the country is to be held. I think the Egyptian Government should have a voice in this question; and if a man like Abdul Kader Pasha could undertake it, with a subsidy from England and English troops at Wady Halfa and Assuan, it might be possible.

To Egypt it is a vital question, and I do not think it fair that England should decide it without letting Egypt have a voice in the matter. Of course, if we are going on in the autumn, it is purely England's affair.

I cannot answer your question more fully without further details of what the future policy of England will be.

I have sent out as many men as I can get that are in any

way trustworthy, but they are not back yet with news from Khartum.

In March the only active fighting in progress against the Dervishes was that carried on in the Eastern Sudan, where Sir Gerald Graham, from his base at Suakin, inflicted two defeats on the rascally Dervish leader, Osman Digna. On April 21,[1] however, it was announced in Parliament that no further offensive operations would be undertaken in the Sudan.

Then the question arose whether Dongola was to be retained, or whether there should be a withdrawal to some more northerly point in the Nile valley. Wolseley recommended that, in default of an autumn campaign, Wadi Halfa and Korosko should be held as outposts, with a strong force at Assuan; but his own view was against retreat and in favour of holding on to the Dongola province. Buller, Wilson, and Kitchener, who were consulted, all regarded the abandonment of Dongola as unthinkable, and advocated an advance on Khartum as the only mode of effecting the supreme object of "smashing up the Mahdi." Even Baring, who favoured the abandonment of Dongola, urged that it should not be carried out at once.

Kitchener had already carried the argument of the soldiers a step further. He inferred from the news he had of the anti-Mahdist reaction in Darfur and Kordofan that "the Mahdi must either advance or disappear," and he pointed out that our retirement would give the False Prophet two rich provinces and confer on him a fresh lease of power.

1 Two days earlier General Grenfell was appointed Sirdar.

Remonstrance was unavailing. On May 8 the Gladstone Government notified their adhesion to the policy of withdrawal, a decision endorsed later by the Salisbury Ministry. There was the further question, what could be done to secure something like order in the Sudan after we should have left it. The problem of settling the country under existing conditions proved insoluble. What was irreverently termed "the Policy of Scuttle"—whether inevitable or not—was bound to rob the Sudan of its only chance of peace and quiet, to say nothing of good government. The Home authorities cherished a vain hope that by money, unsupplemented by physical force, "something might be done," if not to staunch the wounds of the unhappy country and alleviate the miseries of its people, at least to cover them up decently and hide them out of sight. The governorship of this or that province was offered—almost promiscuously—to this or that sheikh or other notable; but none of those approached on the subject would have anything to say to the proposals, not even when backed with large bribes. As the time for our leaving the Sudan drew near, almost anybody could have had almost anything for the mere asking. Would Khash'm-el-Mus accept a province, or Sheikh Saleh, or the Kashif of Debbeh? Would any gentleman—the Melek of Argo,[1] or Said Agha, for instance—kindly oblige by "taking charge" of the Merawi or Debbeh districts, with "a subsidy of £5000 per annum so long as the Mahdi's forces are

1 A little later, at Halfa, Colonel Chermside invested the Melek with the Order of the Medjidieh. After the banquet which succeeded the ceremony the guest of honour was missing for some time, but was eventually found in the kitchen helping the cook—who was his brother—to wash up the dishes!

kept out of the country''? The Mahdi's forces!—there was ''the rub''! Who indeed was sufficient for these things? ''Make it clear to Said Agha that all we want him to do is to try and establish some law and order in the district.'' Truly it sounds a modest requirement enough—at any rate, till it comes to ''keeping out the Mahdi.'' That was the crux. So the conditions had to be relaxed. The recipients of these pressing invitations showed a painful promptitude in excusing themselves on the ground that they were just ''going to leave.'' Then, ''Please, if you can, select some one man who is going to stay, and appoint him Kashif, asking him to try and maintain law and order for the public benefit. There is now no question about keeping the Mahdi out—merely one of keeping order within!''

In these distressing straits Buller applied to Kitchener for advice, instructing him to draw up a report on the whole question of the ''Future of the Sudan.'' The report was very rapidly but very carefully drawn, and exists in three recensions, the first being a summary sent by telegram to allay Buller's impatience:

May 1. *Kitchener, Debbeh, to Buller, Dongola.*

1. Political.—Mahdi must advance or disappear. See Darfur and Kordofan. Mahdi delivers people from Turkish oppressors, and people deliver themselves from Mahdi. Present waning power of Mohammed Ahmed would be greatly resuscitated by easy acquisition of two districts in his front—populous, rich in money, and bearing almost all dates of Sudan. Deprecate leaving him this fresh lease of life and power.

2. Future Government.—I understand problem to be to form stable Government without other help than money.

I believe this to be impossible, but native Government of following description might possibly exist a short time. Divide Province into three: (1) Shaikiyeh, (2) South Dongola, (3) North Dongola—each ruled by a Vakil, all under one Mudir, but without power for him to change his Vakils. Khash'm-el-Mus to be Mudir, pay 150 per month; Mohammed Bey Abud, Said Agha, Melek of Argo, to be Vakils respectively, 60 per month; present black and native troops to be left. Note blood feud between Shaikiyeh and Dongolawi. Any other person of rank and strength of character, and equally to be trusted, would be preferable as Mudir; but there is no one who would accept, and I doubt Khash'm-el-Mus [1] taking it.

Wilson has a rival proposal of his own:

Could you send me some notes with your views about what the boundary [between Egypt and the Sudan] should be, supposing we withdrew now, and had no autumn campaign? Should Dongola be kept; if so, would you accept the post of Governor, with an unsmashed [2] Mahdi, and British troops for ten or eleven months? Please write fully; it will go no further, but I should like to be ready for any questions. With Chermside at Suakin and you at Dongola—both having your hands free—I should have no fear for Egypt.

Smarting under the unjust attacks made upon him

1 Even if this elderly personage had accepted office he might not have been very satisfactory:

"*May* 17. *From General Commanding Debbeh, to Khash'm-el-Mus Pasha, Korti.*—Please come to Debbeh at once. I have matters of great importance to yourself which I am ordered by Lord Wolseley to talk over with you."

"*May* 18. *From Baker to A.A.G.F.F., Debbeh.*—Your telegram of yesterday received, ordering me to send Khash'm-el-Mus to Debbeh immediately. I communicated it to him yesterday verbally, and to-day in writing; and he says he has important business here, and wishes you to wire to him. He also says he has wired to you on the subject. This is only an excuse, and his 'important business' consists principally of getting drunk. He declines to take orders from me, as he is a Pasha! Please wire for him and keep him, as he is a perfect nuisance here. Am wiring to General Buller."

2 In allusion to Gordon's phrase, "Smash up the Mahdi."

at home, Wilson might well be excused the tone of bitterness in which, writing confidentially to Kitchener, he criticised the arrangements for the advance on Khartum. His views are worth comparing with those expressed by Kitchener in February:

> DONGOLA, *May* 18.—Government are determined to carry out their Policy of Scuttle. I wrote as strongly as I could and said that, if they evacuate now, they will have to re-conquer the country in less than two years' time. I thought they were going to change their minds, but there is no prospect of that now.
>
> I am awfully disgusted; they have been trying to make me responsible for the Scuttling policy as well as for Gordon's murder and the fall of Khartum. They cannot, however, do that in face of my last report.
>
> As regards Gordon, I must leave it to time. I cannot say to the public, "If Stewart had been allowed to carry out the original plan and march straight to Metamma, there would have been no desert fight, and Khartum and Gordon would have been saved." Nor can I talk about the contradictory orders relating to the purchase of camels, which upset the transport; nor again [reveal] that—every one knowing in November that Gordon could only hold out till Christmas Day—no special efforts were made to perfect the Desert Column and transport; nor that the force which reached the Nile was too weak, and composed of too many regiments, to attempt any important enterprise.

The Mahdi died suddenly on June 20, his secular leadership being taken up by the Khalifa Abdullah-el-Taaishi. Only July 5 the British troops evacuated Dongola. Two days earlier Kitchener, resigning his commission in the Egyptian Army, had sailed with the Heavy Cavalry and Guards' Regiments of the Camel Corps from Alexandria on board the

steamship *Australia.* On his arrival in England he was among the officers presented at Osborne to Queen Victoria, who in after-life continually favoured him with marks of her personal regard and sincere friendship.[1]

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER XVI

REPORT ON THE SUDAN AND ITS FUTURE

By Major Kitchener

On April 30 Kitchener sent in from Debbeh his report as to the possible settlement of the Sudan—the country which thirteen years later he was to liberate and administer.

Debbeh, *April* 30, 1885.

Sir—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your telegram of to-day directing me to send you a Report, 1st, on my present idea of the political situation here; and, 2nd, on the possibility of establishing in the country some Government subsidised by Egypt.

1. PRESENT SITUATION

It appears to me that Mohammed Ahmed will not in the future be able to call upon Kordofan for recruits. He led the Bagara Arabs down to Khartum by playing successfully on their religious fanaticism and their greed. Religion supplied one motive, and further support was gained through the new relationships which he formed by marrying the daughters of the principal chiefs. But perhaps the greatest

Arab greed disappointed at Khartum.

1 Princess Beatrice wrote to him at Pretoria on February 8, 1901: "The day before my dear Mother died, when hardly conscious of her surroundings, she suddenly asked, 'What news is there from Lord Kitchener?' "

of the influences which he exercised over the majority of his Arabs was the prospect he held out of great loot in Khartum. It needed all his efforts to keep them there during the long siege, when they suffered much both from smallpox[1] and from want of food and other necessaries; and the final promise—great treasure and loot—had to be kept constantly dangled before their eyes. When at last the place fell, the Arabs found their mistake and were greatly disappointed. The result was a reaction of feeling disastrous to the Mahdi's power in Kordofan, many sheikhs attempting to leave him. This he resented, and by harshness drove them into open revolt. During the Mahdi's absence from Kordofan the numerous merchants and natives who have been ruined by the stoppage of all trade fostered the feeling against Mohammed Ahmed and his cousin and Vakil the Sherif Mahmud in El Obeid. The result is a very general revulsion of feeling throughout Kordofan.

Mahdi and Kordofan rising.

Mohammed Ahmed, seeing the great danger to his future projects and prestige, is now exerting all his power to recover Kordofan. All Gordon's black troops have been sent under Nur Angara, with many guns; and, if reports are true, they have suffered a similar fate to that which befell General Hicks and his army. Anyway they have not succeeded, and reinforcements under Nur Angara are to be sent up immediately from Khartum. Pending the settlement of this trouble, the Mahdi has given up all efforts to take Sennar, though, if vigorously attacked, the place would without doubt fall easily into his hands.

Bagara coolness.

Whatever may be the result to the Mahdi's arms in Kordofan, I am of opinion that the Bagara Arabs will never in the future form the nucleus of Mohammed Ahmed's power. As it has been in Darfur, so will it be in Kordofan—Mohammed Ahmed delivers the people from Turkish oppression, and they deliver themselves from him.

[1] Perhaps more accurately typhus.

Deprived of Kordofan, the Mahdi will have to depend on the riverain population and such Arab tribes as the Hadendoa, Bisharin, Shukuriyeh, and Beni Amer. Of the riverain population the most devoted of his allies are the Jaalin, the bravest and most warlike of the tribes. Wad-en-Nejumi has now 3000 of these as a corps of observation at Metamma, and doubtless many more have joined the Mahdi's standard.

Mahdi relying on riverain tribes.

Should, however, El Sidi Osman, by the power of the Shukuriyeh, move from Kassala on to the river at Shendy, his great influence over the Jaalin, coupled with his undoubted holiness and his true descent from the Prophet, will, I expect, cause many now in the ranks of the Mahdi to waver in their attachment to the man whom Sidi Osman has dubbed a false teacher. Sidi Osman wields a very great religious influence over the Sudan, but he does not arouse the fear by which Mohammed Ahmed compels those who disbelieve in him or dislike him to declare for him. Should Sidi Osman, however, arrive at Shendy with the Shukuriyeh Arabs, it will cause a great change in the feeling of the neighbouring tribes.

Hostility of Sidi Osman.

Next to the Jaalin come the Shaikiyeh, who last year were on the Mahdi's side and fought for his envoy in the battles with the Mudir of Dongola. Since then they have received peace and have become loyal to the Government. The Mahdi has revenged himself on the Shaikiyeh found in Khartum, and on the many families of the tribe living on the river between Khartum and Metamma. This ill-treatment of their relations and friends has caused a very bitter feeling against the Mahdi amongst the Shaikiyeh of the district, and I am of opinion that now, of all the riverain population, they are the most opposed to the Mahdi and his cause; although doubtless, if left unprotected, they would, under pressure from the enemy, make the best terms with him that they could.

The Shaikiyeh.

The Dongolawi, although they have always remained

loyal, are much more Mahdist at heart than the Shaikiyeh.

The Dongolawi.

Mohammed Ahmed is one of them, and has always treated them leniently and well, and they do not fear him; and some of them, too, are proud that a Dongolawi should have taken such a position in the world.

The old and very bitter blood-feud existing between the Shaikiyeh and the Dongolawi was the true cause of the Mudirate not being lost last year. It was not dislike of Mohammed Ahmed, but intense hatred of the Shaikiyeh, that made the Dongolawi to a man oppose the Shaikiyeh envoy who claimed to be their Emir.

The remainder of the riverain tribes have fought for Mohammed Ahmed and are still with him, but none of these are so important. Of the three large riverain tribes we at present hold two. Of the Arab tribes the Hadendoa and Bisharin have had almost enough of war; and they could not leave their hills and the road to Berber, which they guard. The Shukuriyeh, as already stated, are much under the influence of Sidi Osman, and it is very unlikely that they, or any large section of them, would follow Mohammed Ahmed out of their own country.

The Hadendoa, Bisharin, etc.

The Beni Amer I know little about.

Altogether, I think that, when the Kordofan Arab tribes leave Mohammed Ahmed, he will have very few real desert Arabs with him. I do not think the riverain tribes are anything like as warlike as the desert Arabs; not from want of pluck—they are just as fearless, I consider—but men with property, who have been used to living in houses, do not care to lose all without seeing where it will end. Religious enthusiasm carries them a long way, perhaps further than the desert Arabs; but belief in the Mahdi becomes after a time insufficient to compensate for the loss of all quiet and peace.

Riverain tribes less warlike.

Food is getting very scarce throughout the country, and, if war goes on for another year in the producing districts, I

have little doubt that there will be a famine. The numerous ruined water-wheels will not be repaired, and the cattle of those who have not been ruined are eaten by the fighting men. Without irrigation the country is a fruitless desert. It is said that the poor are already dying of hunger, and that grain is at famine prices. The greatest damper to religious enthusiasm is the having to pay pretty heavily for it.

Food scarcity.

Under these circumstances the addition of the rich province of Dongola, with its great supply of dates, and the money that the present Expedition has poured into it, would bring a great increase to the Mahdi's power and prestige; and in the future the Shaikiyeh and Dongolawi regiments would make no mean contingent amongst his forces.

Retirement of British troops: benefit to Mahdi.

Had it been possible to hold Berber, the Mahdi would, in my opinion, have disappeared very shortly, for advance is a necessity for him; he can neither stand still nor go back. It may perhaps be argued that the same effect would follow from the same cause if Wady Halfa and Assuan were held as frontier posts; but in this case the Mahdi's existence is much prolonged, for he has the whole Sudan; no other influence is at work in the country; to those who may be driven to desperation by the simulated religious fervour they are forced to maintain no hope is held out that a brighter future may be attained by their own efforts.

Mahdi must advance.

The Mahdi's personal influence is paramount in the country, and until he leaves it I hardly think the people could free themselves. Of course this view may be wrong, and the people might emancipate themselves before the Mahdi was ready to take the next step forward; for, having prepared the way by his emissaries, he would doubtless expect at the right moment that the Frontier Force would find a more strategic frontier, with less length of lines of communication, where a deter-

His influence paramount.

mined stand should be made against the Mahdi's power, until next time. The Mahdi now has sent all his available forces to secure his rear. Should they fail to do so, his position would be, in my opinion, so critical that nothing but the cession of the Dongola province could save him.

II. FUTURE GOVERNMENT

Your telegram does not inform me whether the Government it is proposed to establish should be in any way protected by an armed force; but I take it that the intended problem is—how to establish a Government here that should be stable, with no other than money support. I consider it impossible to do this. I do not believe that any native Government that could be formed at a moment's notice would be sufficiently strong to resist the rebel advance following a retirement of our troops. Money, in this case, would, I believe, be powerless. The position of affairs was much stronger before the Expedition came up, and even then it could not have lasted long. Had there been no English force here, the Mudirate would have fallen after Khartum did, if not before.

A strong régime not to be secured by money alone.

If the English troops are needed elsewhere, and the English taxpayer does not like paying for putting down a false prophet and protecting Egypt, then I should take off the muzzle, and let Egypt act energetically for herself and her own preservation. Send up six Egyptian battalions to take the place of the English troops withdrawn, leaving three English battalions here. Reform the Egyptian cavalry and artillery. Let every post along the frontier be made as strong as possible by fortifications and guns. Send up Abdul-Kader Pasha as Governor, and make Cairo back him up. Let Abdul-Kader raise some native levies, and help him with money to be spent on subsidising the province. I think the

"Unmuzzle Egypt."

present frontier, Merawi—Debbeh—Dongola, might be made strong and has many advantages.

But this is going beyond the subject you have directed me to report upon. I merely mention it as the only means, in my opinion, of saving the province from Mohammed Ahmed, and forming a stable Government in it.

In order to see what Government could have any chance of suiting this riverain population I think it is well to consider what their former Government was before the Turkish occupation. Doubtless in their hearts the people look back with feelings of pride to the time when they were free from the Turkish yoke.

History of pre-Turkish régime.

The Dongola province was divided by two great tribes, the Dongolawi or Danagla and the Shaikiyeh, speaking different languages. Between these two endless war raged. The blood feud was most bitter, and no year passed without raids, fights, and bloodshed. The blood feud is even still so strong that no Shaikiyeh notable will willingly pass through the Dongola country, and Shaikiyeh men pass themselves off as Danagla when they are in their enemy's territory. Some six years before the Turkish occupation the Shaikiyeh extended their influence over a portion of the Dongola country, and the only absolutely independent king was the Melek of Argo. This invasion was accomplished under the grandfather of Saleh Bey Wad-el-Mek, who was principal king of the Shaikiyeh, and the grandfather of Mohammed Bey Abud was his Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief. Abud took the fortress at Hetani, and another at Raba, near Abu Gusi.

Danagla-Shaikiyeh feud.

The Danagla then fell under the influence of the Shaikiyeh. About a year later the Sultan of Fertit in Jebel Nuba, grandfather of Said Agha, left his country for some unknown cause, and came down to Dongola with about 5000 slaves. He made an arrangement with the Danagla that, if he should deliver them from the Shaikiyeh, they would recognise him as their supreme

Shaikiyeh supremacy ended.

king. He then went to work, and after six months' fighting retook Hetani and drove the Shaikiyeh back into their own country. Then he ruled the country as supreme king from Mahass to near Korti.

The Turkish occupation.

Then came the time of the Turkish occupation. The Melek of Berber made all the arrangements for the Turkish advance, so that Mohammed Ali Pasha was unopposed in the Danagla and Shaikiyeh countries. It is surprising to me that in the rebel ranks under the Mahdi, where one would have expected to see men ranging themselves under the banners of their former kings, they have not done so. I presume that it is religious fervour that marks as leaders men unknown before. I think, however, that the only chance of a Government being established is by taking the descendants, where fit, of the former ruling houses of the country.

Scheme for re-organising Dongola Province. Three Vakils.

With this view I would divide the province into three Vakilates—(1) the *Skaikiyeh,* (2) *South Dongola,* (3) *North Dongola.* The Vakils to be, respectively, (1) Mohammed Bey Abud, son of Ibrahim Abud, and grandson of the former Prime Minister of the Shaikiyeh, who conquered the Dongolawi. Mohammed Bey is now at Dongola, having come with Khash'm-el-Mus Pasha's party across the desert. He bears a good character for intelligence and capability. The rightful king would be Saleh Bey Wad-el-Mek, who is at present a prisoner in the Mahdi's hands, and is therefore not available. (2) Said Agha, the present Hakim el Khot at Debbeh, who is grandson and heir of the late Sultan of Fertit, who ruled the Danagla. He is brave and intelligent; better educated than most of the notables, being able to read and write. I think he would be inclined to be cruel and warlike. (3) The Melek of Argo, descendant of the ancient kings, respectable and quiet, but without any prominent characteristics.

These three would have to be placed under one head, and, in order to keep the authority, the title of Mudir should be

retained. Without a head there would be no confidence, no one to settle disputes between the Vakils. Each Vakil would suspect that either of the others was making terms with Mohammed Ahmed, and would try to be first in the field to gain his favour. **One Mudir.**

I can only think of Khash'm-el-Mus Pasha for the position, if he would accept it. I consider that this is a very weak point in the project. Placing a Shaikiyeh at the head might create difficulties, and would certainly not be popular among the Dongolawi; they rose and fought against the Mahdi's Shaikiyeh envoy, and might do so again.

I think if a stranger to both could be appointed, it would be much better; but I do not know where to find the man; a Sudani that can be trusted, and is energetic and capable and of good family, is what is required.

The native and black regular troops of the Mudirate would be needed to aid the new Government on the withdrawal of the Turkish garrisons, and sufficient money would have to be supplied to the Mudir, to raise as many soldiers as possible from his district. **Troops needed.**

The division of the Vakilates might be subsequently decided, but the following gives a rough idea of it: (1) *Shaikiyeh.*—Northern boundary, Ambukol; residence, Merawi. (2) *South Dongola.*—Ambukol to Ordeh; residence, Handak. (3) *North Dongola.*—Ordeh to the boundary of the Wady Halfa district, which would probably be changed slightly from its present position; residence, Argo. The Mudir to reside at Ordeh; to have under his direct orders all steamers and troops, except levies raised by his permission by the Vakils for service in their districts. He should not have power to dismiss or replace the Vakils, who should be appointed from Cairo. **Boundaries.**

The Mudir and Vakils must be well paid: I should say, Mudir, £150 per month or more; Vakils, £60 per month, would meet the case. **Salaries.**

The subsidy required would probably amount to about £15,000 a year. I would suggest the **Subsidies.**

Mudir to dispose of £9000 and the Vakils to have each £2000 for the protection of their districts.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,
(Signed) H. H. KITCHENER,
Major.

The Chief-of-the-Staff, Dongola.

CHAPTER XVII

KITCHENER, who had been gazetted Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel, spent his two months' leave in London studying Ottoman law and busy with a pet project for delivering the Egyptian fellahin from the hand of the usurer, which twenty-eight years later he was enabled to carry into law. He was then ordered to rejoin the Royal Engineers in Dublin—with the probable duty before him of designing new barracks at Cork. A few days later, however, he was informed that the War Office had again lent him to the Foreign Office to represent the British Government on a Joint Commission to be sent by England, France, and Germany to Zanzibar for the delimitation of the Sultan's territory.

In the scramble for Africa—and especially for East Africa—international rivalry was becoming more acute, and the Commission with its rather pale label really marked the entry of the German Empire as a colonising Power into competition for the territories of the Great Unknown Continent.

The East Coast of Africa was a tempting morsel. From Cape Delgado southwards the Portuguese had been in nominal possession of the country for over two hundred years, and north of the River Juba the wild Somali tribes inhabiting the littoral up to Cape

Guardafui were not likely to extend a welcome to any Europeans. The supposed desolation of the country and savagery of the people had sufficed to discourage any attempts at colonisation. But between the Somalis and the Portuguese the coast for nearly 900 miles had been claimed, and was largely administered, by an Arab potentate hailing originally from Muscat on the Persian Gulf. Seyyid Barghash, Sultan of Zanzibar, had not been slow to see that, if he established a series of custom-houses along this strip, and took toll of all the goods entering the country, he could not escape being a very rich man. There were many harbours—some of them quite good; the negro tribes of the immediate interior were weak, weaponless, and divided; and Barghash was a man of energy. But both Barghash and his predecessor Majid had wisely forborne to claim sovereignty over very much more than the coast-line, holding little of the interior beyond a few posts in the direction of Lake Nyasa and the South-West.

The Sultan of Zanzibar's occupation of the coast-line would naturally be more than galling to a Power whose aim it was, not only to penetrate and annex portions of the country beyond, but also to appropriate harbours as a means of establishing trade relations with the interior. The Germans—who had lately annexed a large block of the interior west of Bagamoyo—strongly resented any check to their new schemes of colonial aggrandisement as set forth by the German East Africa Company, which had the infamous Karl Peters for its leading spirit and the German Government for its powerful patron. The German idea of colonisation was as far as the poles asunder from our own. Our English tradition has

always been to let the explorer and the trader start operations; when they have overcome all initial difficulties and made good their footing, Britannia steps in, approves and rewards the enterprise of her sons, and proclaims their settlement a British Colony. The Germans began at the other end; their Government first annexed a blank space on the map, and then told its traders and explorers to exploit it, backing them with public money and official administration. There is something to be said for both modes, but British colonies have always flourished and British colonists have been admittedly popular with the natives—an experience which the Germans can scarcely claim.

Kitchener left England in the beginning of November 1885 and reached Zanzibar on the 29th. Before starting he had examined the East Africa question as closely as time would permit; and projecting his thoughts to the day when there should be a flourishing British Colony on the East Coast, he had drawn up during the voyage a memorandum on the necessity of strengthening our very weak communications with that territory.

The British envoy soon saw that one of his colleagues would be very unsympathetic. The mandate of the Commission was simple—to "inquire into the claims of the Sultan of Zanzibar to sovereignty over certain territories on the East Coast of Africa, and to ascertain their precise limits," and to report home. But the German Commissioner's interpretation of these instructions was very different from that of the British and French; he read them as an order to limit the Sultan's territories to the utmost, and congratulated himself that there would be plenty of

coast-line left for the Germans to seize wherever they pleased. The British and the French sought a fair all-round settlement; the Germans sought to lay hands on what they could, and the British Government were at this time—for general reasons of foreign policy—disposed to concede to Germany rather more than she was justly entitled to take.

Kitchener was ready to start work at once, but had to brook many delays. The Germans made trouble even over the preliminaries, and neither their Commissioner, Dr. Schmidt, nor their Consul-General, Dr. Arendt, was easy to treat with. The services of the French representative, M. Patrimonio, were suddenly required for a mission to Madagascar, and he had to be replaced by M. Raffray, the French Consul at Zanzibar. Then the Sultan of Zanzibar objected to be bound by any Commission on which he was unrepresented, and Portugal, as an East African Power, demanded to share its deliberations. The Portuguese claim was hotly opposed by Germany, and Great Britain was not at pains to maintain it. Portugal, nothing daunted, took her own interests into her own hands and asserted a right to Tungi Bay, just north of her Mozambique frontier. The Sultan of Zanzibar was also hurt by the refusal of a seat on the Commission to his representative, who was allowed only to give answers to definite questions,[1] and he was scarcely soothed by the ratification of a minor commercial treaty or the receipt of a Red Eagle.

Germany astutely turned the postponement of the actual Commission's activities to her own advantage.

1 Kitchener was alone in asking that the Sultan's representative, General Mathews, should be allowed to make his own statements.

Her envoys stole a march on their confrères by sending small expeditions to various points and by concluding several so-called treaties with native chiefs, so as to present the Commission with a *fait accompli* on their arrival on the spot. This was the more unfair, as our Government had put pressure on some genuine British *concessionnaires* about Mount Kilimanjaro to abstain from further action until the Commission's report was issued, and the German Government had promised to impose a like restraint on its colonists. Nor would these little "treaties" hold water for a moment. Some of the signatories were bogus sultans with no sort of right to dispose of anything, some of the documents bore no native signature at all, and some were not producible in writing, the fact of their existence resting on the precarious foundation of a German official's word. Brought to book the German Government disowned these particular negotiations, but did nothing to restrain its agents' further pernicious activities.

At last, on January 19, 1886, the Commission started on its first sea-trip and carefully examined the coast from Cape Delgado northwards. At almost every little harbour, as at other places, they found representatives of the Zanzibar Customs or Army, and on arrival at Dar-es-Salaam they were fain to admit that nearly the whole coast was under Zanzibari rule. Kitchener and Raffray candidly reported to this effect, adding that here and there the rule of the Sultan could be traced inland for forty or fifty miles. But these pronouncements were not to the German taste; Schmidt objected to almost all the findings of his colleagues, despite their resting on the clear evidence of local witnesses, and he

would not put on German spectacles, the sooner the Commission was broken up the better.

The German Foreign Office accordingly complained of the "fixed views" which they were pleased to attribute to the British representative, that the country between two neighbouring Zanzibari posts must necessarily belong to the Sultan. Lord Salisbury replied that, as Kitchener was occupying a quasi-judicial position, he must be left entirely free to form his own conclusions. Schmidt now amiably reported that Raffray and Kitchener were making a dead set against him, and that Sir John Kirk, our very able and admirable Consul-General at Zanzibar, was egging on the Sultan to oppose all German interests. The Foreign Office was in a difficult position; Kirk and Kitchener even more so. The British Government, while anxious to safeguard British interests and to do the Sultan no harm, was equally anxious—largely for the sake of Egypt—to conciliate Germany and to put no rude check on her colonial aspirations. Kirk and Kitchener, for their part, were anxious as to how strongly they would be backed in performing their duty in face of German opposition and intrigue.

Their duty was rendered the more difficult by the incessant and unvarying reports of German ill-treatment of natives. A German party had taken unlicensed tribute from a native caravan; a couple of Germans had tried to rob a village and had shot a native who interfered; a German had maltreated and murdered one of his porters; there were some unpleasant stories about German relations with native women. Native suspicion had been badly aroused. It was becoming increasingly dangerous for any white man to travel into the interior, and the

murder of Bishop Hannington in Uganda was ascribed to a belief in an imminent invasion of wicked white men. The German method of colonisation had indeed been very unhappy.

A change of Government at home served to strengthen Kitchener's hands to negotiate. The new Foreign Secretary, Lord Rosebery, was prompt to deal with Kitchener's complaint that the German Commissioner was accompanied by one Herr Denhardt who was styled, but never used as, an "interpreter"—another individual being employed when an interpreter was really required. Denhardt was a private citizen commercially interested in concessions on the coast, who had exploited a small company up Witu way, and had parleyed with a good many of the chiefs between Lamu and Zanzibar. Schmidt found him very useful. Kitchener and Raffray found him very detrimental. "The fact," wrote Kitchener, "that a member of the German Colonisation Society accompanied the Commission and was in constant touch with the German Commissioners naturally causes the impartiality of the Commission to be questioned." He begged that a protest should be entered, so that Denhardt might no longer be a travelling companion.

Lord Rosebery at once instructed the British Ambassador in Berlin to represent how indiscreet and injurious was Herr Denhardt's presence with the Commission, and to beg that he might be withdrawn. Prince Bismarck assured our Ambassador that it was not Denhardt but his brother who had commitments on the coast. Inquiry proved that the Chancellor had confused the fraternal interests, and Denhardt was recalled, though not in time to prevent his

taking part in the second voyage along the coast, when the extent of the Zanzibari sovereignty was further determined.

In his Memorandum on the insecurity of our routes to the East Coast of Africa, Kitchener had emphasised the point that, in case of trouble in East African waters, the only port of which we could make marine or telegraphic use was Zanzibar—which did not belong to us. "Our large coaling-station at Zanzibar," he said, "is at the mercy of any attack, and English ships in these waters have to rely, in case of breakdown or mishap, on the Seychelles, an undeveloped station of doubtful capabilities and at a considerable distance." The French had only recently acquired the magnificent harbour of Diego Suarez in Madagascar; and "the balance of power is also affected by the presence of a German fleet, sent here with avowed hostile intentions to the Sovereign Power, Zanzibar, and by the proposed permanent establishment of two German men-of-war in these waters. . . . The German harbour of Dar-es-Salaam gives that Power a close and convenient base, which might be rapidly placed in a state of defence, and from which much damage might be done in these seas."

Kitchener then and thus forewarned the Government of possible German hostility in East Africa, and pleaded with them to strengthen our position in its coastal waters and secure our sea communications. He suggested the making of a railway along the Suez Canal, the fortification of Perim—at the southern exit from the Red Sea—and the rehoisting of our flag on the island of Sokotra; he pressed for the immediate acquisition of Mombasa, its harbour

being large, healthy, excellent, and easily defended. The land round the town was already English property; all the interests and commerce of the place were in British or British-Indian hands; Mombasa was "the most probable port from which any railway system for opening up the interior would start,[1] and its possession would give to England a commercial base without which it would be impossible to develop the trade of Central Africa." Mombasa had at one time been a British possession, and the natives would welcome the British Flag there again. On the other hand, "the Treaty with the Sultan of Zanzibar, under which the Germans acquired Dar-es-Salaam, forms a precedent which renders it easy for England, by similar action, to obtain from the Sultan a port on the mainland, to act as the naval station and depot in these waters."

The proposal was favoured by the Foreign Office but disfavoured at the Admiralty, the Lords Commissioners opining that Zanzibar was sufficient, and that to move would be troublesome. This answer was referred to Kitchener, who thought that the Admiralty had missed the point: Zanzibar could not be defended against attack, and the Germans would of course turn Dar-es-Salaam into a naval base. Germany's acquisitiveness would tend to the break-up of Zanzibar and to the weakening of our own position.

The Admiralty may have resented a soldier's intrusion into naval policy; anyhow, "their Lordships had nothing to add to their former reply." Lord Rosebery was persistent; he secured the assent of the Colonial and India Offices and again addressed

1 Mombasa was actually the terminus some ten years later.

the Admiralty. This consensus of opinion had some effect. There was now no objection to our obtaining a lease of Mombasa port—for commercial purposes. In the event, however, it was not by lease that we obtained Mombasa, but by a subsequent agreement concerning German and British spheres of influence.

In default of getting rid of Kitchener, Schmidt hoped much from the return of Raffray to his consulate; but Raffray's successor, a distinguished official, M. Lemaire, drew the Entente still closer. He and his English colleague had to contend with further German-bred trouble—generally about land claims; both were dismayed to note how German public officials went all the way with German private individuals in their disregard for equity in dealing with the natives; and Kitchener was somewhat distressed to note that their conduct, so alien to an English sense of honour, provoked no stern remonstrance from the British Government. The climax came when the British and French Governments yielded to the insistent demands of the Germans that none but unanimous findings of the Commission should rank. This meant that only minor points as to the rights of Zanzibar on which the three Commissioners were agreed would appear in their final Report; the mass of information—which, in the opinion of the British and French Commissioners, established the Zanzibari claim to a very large extent of territory—would be suppressed.

The German Commissioner had refused to be bound by the evidence which the three had collected. It was their custom to draw up a *procès-verbal* describing the testimony they had gathered at each point visited, and on this to base their judgement

as to the nature and extent of the Zanzibari sovereignty. The great majority of Zanzibari claims were admitted, on the clearest evidence, by Kitchener and Raffray—or Lemaire. Schmidt, with a fine contempt for evidence, would raise one objection after another, and then only admit the smallest fraction of the Zanzibari rights; but the opinions of all three were recorded on the *procès-verbaux.*

So far truth suffered no violation. But the new stipulation that the final Report was to be drawn up on the "unanimous" basis meant that an entirely false impression would be given. The Commissioners had to avow themselves *"unanimes à reconnaître les droits souverains de Zanzibar sur les points qui suivent,"* and they stated them seriatim. Where Kitchener and Raffray considered that the Sultan should have a strip 10 miles wide, and Schmidt said he should only have 3, the 3-mile strip was given in the Report as *"unanime";* of course it was literally true that they unanimously awarded him 3 miles; but the opinion of two of the three Commissioners that he ought to have 7 miles more was, by order, unrecorded—a startling example of *suppressio veri, suggestio falsi.* The upshot was that the joint Anglo-French award as to the territory due to Zanzibar was entirely omitted from the Report, which, shorn of its major findings, was put out as the unanimous verdict of the Commission!

Kitchener, constrained to sign this specious document, covered it with a letter to the Foreign Office, giving his views in detail as to Zanzibari territories. His remarks were treated with every consideration —but no more. Larger negotiations were afoot in Europe, and he had to be content with learning that

"Her Majesty's Government recognises the zeal and ability with which your share in those inquiries has been conducted, and are convinced that the result of your exertions has been to place much valuable information at their disposal." He had to deplore a year later that the Sultan of Zanzibar's territories were still further reduced, and that a line of delimitation of spheres of influence was drawn on the map, by which practically the whole of the magnificent Kilimanjaro range was, for the mere asking, handed over to Germany.[1]

1 The exchange of Heligoland for a Protectorate over Zanzibar and some minor concessions in the Great Lake regions did not take place till nearly four years afterwards (July 1, 1890).

CHAPTER XVIII

Kitchener was at Suez on his way home when he was informed by telegraph of his appointment[1] to the "Governor-Generalship of the Eastern Sudan and Red Sea Littoral"—a magniloquent phrase which, rendered into the idiom of strict fact, meant the command of the squalid little town and port of Suakin; for in these parts the Khedive's writ did not then run in the Eastern Sudan far outside its walls.

The new Governor-General's first thought was to establish good relations with the local tribes; to the friendly he sent letters of encouragement, to the doubtful he wrote advising them, if they wanted peace and prosperity, to come in and see him at Suakin. The moment was propitious, as Osman Digna, having for three years kept the Eastern Sudan in a ferment, had rather overreached himself. The tribes, who had once fervently embraced the Mahdist cause and who had hurled themselves on to the British and Egyptian squares in 1884 and 1885, were just a little tired of Dervish oppression, and were finding the possession of the True Faith rather dear at the price of a system of brigandage

1 The offer of the appointment was made "on the understanding that his services, if required, shall again be available for the Zanzibar Commission."

which prohibited trade and produced devastated crops and desolated villages.

"The people," wrote an officer on the spot at the end of 1886, "have never joined heartily in the Mahdist revolt, and are now peaceable and well-disposed. The Government's authority is already recognised everywhere within a radius of twenty miles from Suakin. To the north the country is on the whole friendly, whilst to the south, though the Mahdist interest is still decidedly prominent, the Government gains ground daily. . . . Kitchener has been immensely successful, having used great energy and more tact."

Gradually [wrote Kitchener himself in 1887] it became known that the sheikhs would receive peace and forgiveness, and that their personal safety in journeying to and from Suakin would be assured. Many chiefs came in to see me. My general remarks to them were that they had brought the present state of anarchy and trouble—which they all complained of—on themselves by following a wrong religion and false leaders, and that they must see to righting these matters and not expect the Government to do it for them; that I was quite happy if they professed Mahdiism, but that, if they wished for peace and tranquillity, I recommended them to discard entirely this false creed—which attempted to place a Dongolawi on a par with the Prophet Mohammed—and not to allow any Dervish or follower of Mahdiism to enter their country.

"In my opinion," the Governor-General told Baring, "the only way to deal with Arabs and to pacify the Sudan is by adhering to a straightforward, continuous line of policy, taking the greatest precaution that no doubt shall possibly exist in the Arab mind as to the absolute certainty and truth of

one's word. By this means both confidence is gained and respect and liking preserved, even though it is necessary to be severe with them at times."

Constant profession and consistent practice of a friendly policy towards the Sudanese could not render an administrator immune from attacks by humanitarians at home, who publicly accused him of "a wicked and wanton policy," and of "attempting to retax and regovern the people against their will."

Kitchener's reply to the charge was terse: "I have had written upon the gate of Suakin 'Peace to those who enter and who leave this place,' and I have strictly carried out these principles. During my administration no one has ever been punished for previous acts of hostility or for present political opinions." He suggested also that those who airily pronounced the pacification of the country to be an easy matter should visit the interior and try their hand at it.

> Why [he asked] do refugees from the interior thank God for their escape? Why can none of them return, even when they have left their wives and families behind? Why have even natives to be paid highly to penetrate the country of these peace-loving inhabitants of the Sudan? (9.1.88.)

But if cranks at home complained, competent critics on the spot were complimentary. Sir Frederick Stephenson, when handing over the command of the British forces in Egypt, wrote:

> I am very sorry that our connection in the Service has come to an end; I shall always look back with satisfaction to the very pleasant manner in which we have worked together, and I thank you very sincerely for the hearty and ready manner in which you have invariably carried out my

wishes, and for the cordial and willing spirit in which you have received any hint I may have had occasion to send you. It has been a very great comfort to me to work with a man in whom I have felt such confidence.

I fully appreciate the many difficulties you have had to contend against during the time you have held your present appointment, which could only have been satisfactorily dealt with by a man of your experience, energy, and ability. You have done credit to your Corps and the Service at large, and they may well be proud of you. (3.1.88.)

No pacification of the Sudan could of course be looked for without the corresponding prostration of the Dervish power; and exploiting that power in its utmost maleficence the Khalifa Abdullah-el-Taaishi was now in full sway and swing. The idea started by the Porte in 1885 of negotiating with the Dervishes scarcely survived Yussuf Pasha's mission in 1886, and was finally dispelled in the following year, when the Khalifa addressed a personal letter to Queen Victoria inviting her to come herself with her armies and fight with "the host of God," it being further intimated that if the challenge were not accepted the same host would raze Her Majesty's dwelling "and let her taste of sorrow."

In the earlier part of 1887 the purlieus of Suakin were troubled only by a succession of irritating little Dervish raids which the friendly Amarar and Hadendoa tribes resented and resisted; but in the autumn, when, owing to the apparently peaceful state of the district, two battalions were withdrawn from the garrison, Osman Digna caught at an opportunity, and moving rapidly from Kassala to Handub, some fifteen miles north of Suakin, ravaged the country up to the walls of the city, which he truculently an-

nounced he was going to take. Here, however, he reckoned without the local tribes; the Amarar defied his orders to join him, broke up two of his columns, and hustled him back to Handub.

Early in 1888 Kitchener obtained permission from the Sirdar, Sir Francis Grenfell, to try what he could do against Handub with Friendlies, Irregulars, Police, and a few Mounted men that were available; Regular infantry were ruled out, as if the coup did not come off it was not intended to avenge losses by an expedition.

Kitchener's main wish was to lay Osman Digna by the heels and to liberate a number of slaves and local Arabs in bondage. His "Irregulars" consisted of Jehadia riflemen, many of whom had deserted from Osman's camps and were burning to take vengeance on him. There were also black ex-soldiers, and a few Regulars of the Tenth Sudanese, who smuggled themselves in amongst the other "scallywags," vainly trusting to luck to pass unnoticed in the darkness of the night.[1] Several of them, however, had subsequently to be reported killed in action, and Kitchener's wound perhaps saved him from the Sirdar's severe strictures.

Before dawn on January 17 the force of 450 men started along the railway track for Handub. After a three hours' march, the horse halted while the foot went forward to attack the camp, which was supposed to be close by, but was actually three miles off.

1 "We took out a lot of blacks not in uniform. Before starting at 1 A.M. I inspected them and discovered that there were in the ranks a lot of black soldiers of the Tenth Sudanese who were in their shirts and drawers and pretending to belong to the other crowd. I reported this to Kitchener and asked him, 'Shall I turn them out or shut my eyes?' He replied, 'Shut your eyes'" (Diary of Captain, afterwards Brigadier-General, T. E. Hickman, M.P.).

An hour later Kitchener, impatient at receiving no news, moved his mounted men on at a fast trot to within half-a-mile of the village, where the position had become awkward; the Blacks and Friendlies, after charging through the village, killing many Dervishes, and narrowly missing Osman Digna himself, had in their turn been taken in rear. The Friendlies promptly cleared off to the bush, but the Blacks still held a small knoll against an attack on two sides by Dervishes who had mustered under cover of the hills.

Dismounting his men, Kitchener poured volleys into the enemy, disengaged his Blacks, and blew the "rally" for another assault. The Blacks responded gallantly to the call, but were too few to make much impression; and their leader had to bestir himself to save as many as he could of the escaping slaves whom the Dervish cavalry were trying to round up.

Meanwhile, from the more distant rocky ground a heavy fire was being kept up by the enemy; Kitchener was hit by a bullet in the lower jaw, and had to hand over the command to Hickman, directing him to retire on Suakin. The retreat was skilfully effected; the enemy, who had lost 300 men, pursued faintly, and our casualties were only nineteen men killed and twice as many wounded.

Osman Digna had not been captured, nor his headquarters destroyed, but a large number of slaves had been freed, our Blacks had put up a fine fight, and Kitchener received a brevet Colonelcy. His injury was reported as "a comminuted fracture of the right lower jaw—breathing and swallowing difficult —tonsils inflamed," and he was sent to Cairo.

The Queen, who appointed him an Aide-de-Camp,

demanded daily bulletins as to his progress, and Wolseley wrote, "Every one here was extremely grieved to hear of your wound, and all wish you speedy recovery. We shall be badly off at Suakin until you are well enough to return there, which I hope and trust for your own sake as well as the country's may be very soon."

The surgeons found it difficult to extract the bullet, and a day or two after his arrival in hospital Kitchener's breathing was suddenly obstructed by the bullet's entering his throat. He had a moment's agony when he thought he was going to be choked, but with a desperate effort he swallowed the bullet, and nature did the rest. His recovery was then rapid, and on February 19 he was able to tell Wolseley that he hoped to be back at Suakin in ten days. Incidentally he belies the notion that he was unappreciative of good offices rendered him:

> I have been very well treated by the medical staff and nurses of the Citadel Hospital, and I should take it as a personal favour if you could write them a word of praise, which, I am sure, they would prize.
>
> Brigade-Surgeon Markey, Surgeon-Major Wood, Surgeon Hunter, and Sister Cavell have been unremitting in their attention, and the doctors have shown, in my opinion, great ability.
>
> The whole hospital is wonderfully well managed. I feel that I owe those I have mentioned a great debt of gratitude which I cannot better repay than by taking this opportunity of letting you know how excellently well they perform their duties.

Kitchener was back in Suakin early in March, but only for a few weeks; in May, as he was still suffering from the effects of his wound, he went home on

leave, returning in September to take up in Cairo the billet of Adjutant-General to which he had now been appointed. He was soon in the field again, and the field was again Suakin.

Osman Digna having procured some guns started a trench siege of the town. Lieut.-Col. Gordon, R.E., promptly replaced our entrenchments by a stone wall, with outlying forts of solid masonry, and the Sirdar, Sir Francis Grenfell, came himself in November and ordered up the 2nd King's Own Scottish Borderers, with two Sudanese battalions, to constitute a force of nearly 5000 men.

Kitchener varied the duties of Adjutant-General with some cavalry reconnaissance work. He was also in turn Chief-of-the-Staff and Second in Command, and he finally assumed command of the Force.

In December it was arranged that two brigades, led respectively by the Adjutant-General and Colonel Holled Smith, who had succeeded him at Suakin, should make a demonstration in force, and on the 20th the two brigades attacked in flank, and then took all the Dervish trenches in front of the Gemaizeh Fort, inflicting nearly 500 casualties and incurring negligible losses. The British troops, having helped their dark colleagues to free the environs of Suakin from further annoyance, went back to Cairo, where Kitchener also returned at the end of the following January. He thought it well to write to Grenfell:

I always did my best to use all kindliness, justice, and truth to those under my rule; and the spontaneous addresses I received from all classes on my leaving the Government, together with the thousand ways their friendly feelings have been shown me since my return, though no longer in power, are a sufficient proof to me that what I tried to do

was appreciated. It is absolutely false that I made raids to induce counter-attacks in order to increase the garrison of Suakin.

Anxious though he was to promote trade in the Sudan, he had to urge precaution lest the Dervishes should thereby secure the very supplies which would keep them active. Sir Evelyn Baring wrote to Lord Salisbury that on this point he had drawn his own opinion into line with that of his subordinate:

As regards the opening of trade . . . I am inclined to think that, judged by the light of subsequent events, Colonel Kitchener's view of the situation a year ago was more correct than my own. It can scarcely be doubted that the supplies which the Dervishes were able to obtain facilitated their operations against Suakin.

I have only to add that Colonel Kitchener is a very gallant soldier, who has often risked—and at least on one occasion very nearly lost—his life in the performance of his military duties. In the conduct of civil affairs his task was one of very exceptional difficulty. . . . Sir F. Grenfell on his return from Suakin told me that no one possessed so much influence with the heads of tribes as Colonel Kitchener. . . . I do not think that I am committing any breach of confidence in stating that Mgr. Sogaro, who visited Suakin about a year ago, spoke to me on his return in the highest terms of Colonel Kitchener's administration. (15.1.89.)

CHAPTER XIX

The year 1889 brought comparative quiet to the Eastern Sudan, but an increase of activity on the Nile. Ever since 1885, when the Sudan was relinquished, there had been frequent rumours, and occasional indications, of an invasion of Egypt. The Dervishes had constantly followed up our retiring troops, and though sharply checked at Ginniss [1] on December 30, 1885, they had again pushed on towards Wadi Halfa, raiding villages and tearing up our railway. Their progress was persistent though slow. The Khalifa had his hands pretty full with a revolt in Kordofan and the active hostility of the Kababish near Dongola, which was not crushed till their chief, Saleh Bey, was killed two years later. But our Frontier Force was kept on the *qui vive* by threatening movements which extended many miles north of Halfa.

As far back as 1887 the chieftain Wad-el-Nejumi was known to be mustering a large force for a descent on Lower Egypt, and early in 1889 he was actually marching, with some 15,000 followers, from Dongola northwards. This menace could not, indeed, be very serious so long as the Nile north of Halfa was in our hands; a large Dervish army

[1] 110 miles south of Wadi Halfa.

tramping through the desert parallel to the river must expose itself to attack. Arabs had, however, been known to make remarkable expeditions across wide stretches of country, unsupplied apparently with either water or grain, and if the Dervishes, utilising wells unknown to us, should penetrate north, the Egyptian troops would constitute the sole barrier between barbarism and civilisation.

The Dervish invasion was probably determined by the white-hot zeal and resolution of Wad-el-Nejumi. For this brave and sincere believer in Mahdiism—a description quite inapplicable to either the Mahdi or his successor, the Khalifa—no difficulties or dangers were prohibitive. Taunted by his tyrannical master with inaction he set himself to try the impossible. His confidence in his men was as thorough as his contempt for the Egyptians. His Emirs were picked fighters; the troops had brought their wives and children. Behind them lay the country they had raided bare; in front the rich lands of Egypt lured them on. June 1889 was nearly out before Nejumi came within measurable distance of Halfa. Here, however, he was awaited by Colonel Wodehouse, R.A.,[1] who, secretly organising a flying column of 2000 men, with stern-wheelers and barges to transport them, landed on July 1 on the left bank at Argin, three miles north of Halfa—thus forestalling Nejumi's intention to occupy the same point. In a sharp fight the assailant suffered 900 casualties and shed 500 prisoners, our own losses amounting only to 11 killed and 59 wounded.

Wodehouse's column was of course numerically no match for Nejumi's main body, but whilst he was

1 Afterwards General Sir Josceline Heneage Wodehouse.

harrying the enemy the Sirdar was sending rapidly a considerable force upstream to Assuan, with the promise of a British Brigade to follow.

Nejumi's troubles thickened. It was difficult enough to feed his 3000 fighting men—the 4000 followers were already starving—but he would presently have to provide for a strong body of reinforcements under Makin-el-Nur. Yet, though the Dervishes were already reduced to eating their donkeys and camels, their leader returned a scornful reply to the Sirdar's suggestion that he should retire before it was too late.

The Egyptian Force, concentrated at Toski, a village twenty miles north of the temple at Abu Simbel, consisted of Wodehouse's column and a mixed column of mounted troops and infantry, under the Adjutant-General. On July 29 the Sirdar arrived, and, after reconnoitring for himself on August 2, decided to hold up Nejumi until the arrival of the British Brigade, part of which would not be leaving Assuan till the 4th. Meanwhile, he ordered a strong reconnaissance by all the mounted troops under Kitchener's command for the following day at dawn, so as to delay Nejumi's advance.

Kitchener's cavalry, whom the Sirdar accompanied, having arrived close to the enemy's camp, fell back from point to point as the Dervish riflemen advanced. Then, learning from Kitchener that Nejumi was changing direction to the north-west and evidently bent on avoiding a fight, Grenfell immediately decided to bring him to bay, and, though the scene of action would be five miles from the river, he despatched orders to the camp for Wodehouse to bring out the infantry and artillery at once. Kitch-

ener was directed to make a considerable *détour* to the north to head off the enemy, and did this so effectually that Nejumi, finding the way blocked, had to halt and establish himself among the rocks against our attack.

The issue was not long in doubt. Our infantry—many of them breakfastless and breathless—arrived with all speed, and were at once engaged with the enemy, who, pushed out of their first position by a flank attack, fell back to a second ridge, losing heavily and inflicting in their desperate charges such loss as they could. When the Sirdar at noon sounded the general advance, the enemy were in full retreat, leaving their camp behind the ridge with nearly 5000 prisoners in our hands. The remainder of the Dervishes, hunted by our horsemen, disappeared over the horizon, some to die of starvation in the desert, some to give themselves up on the banks of the Nile.[1] Wad-el-Nejumi himself was killed, and his small son fell into the hands of our troops to be sent to Cairo, where he was cared for and not a little spoilt by the good nuns in the principal hospital. The Dervishes suffered a smashing defeat; and the only sore hearts on our side were those of the British troops who had not arrived in time.[2]

Our losses were immeasurably small—25 killed and 140 wounded—as compared with the effect of the action. Not only was Egypt saved from insult, but the headlong flight of the remaining Dervishes southwards for 140 miles enabled us to push our

1 Their number was very large. They were tenderly treated, sent down to Damietta, shown round Alexandria, and ultimately repatriated with supplies of rice and dates. These attentions they repaid by furnishing us for some time with monthly "states" of the Khalifa's army.

2 A squadron of the 20th Hussars was the only British unit which took part in the battle.

frontier posts out 30 miles to Sarras. The frontier itself had peace.

Baring telegraphed to Lord Salisbury that "Colonel Kitchener commanded the mounted troops with his usual activity and forethought, heading the enemy off till the arrival of the infantry, and making dispositions which greatly conduced to the success of the action and subsequent heavy Dervish loss."

Toski marks a distinct change in Egypt's relations with the Sudan. The Mahdist bubble was pricked. The Dervish terror was less terrifying than had been supposed; the Dervish capacity of offensive had been over-rated and Egypt's capacity of self-defence under-estimated. The aggressive power of Mahdiism collapsed, and Egypt, whose military reputation had been steadily growing, could feel confident of holding her own. The value of Toski was enhanced on February 19, 1891, at Tokar, when the granary of the Eastern Sudan was captured and the province restored to Egyptian rule.

In the autumn Kitchener spent a few weeks' leave in India, and early in 1890 Baring requested him to undertake the reorganisation of the Egyptian Police Force. The Constabulary question was pressing and difficult. Baring had already suffered under two rather rough attempts to untie the knot. Valentine Baker Pasha—who, expecting to revive the Army, had been relegated to the Police—busied himself with trying to mould the *gendarmerie* into a military reserve; Clifford Lloyd, after uprooting the system which subjected the Police to local native authorities, failed to plant anything in its place. Baring was now for enlisting Kitchener to unravel the tangle. In vain the latter demurred, frankly

avowing his fear of being left out of the running for the Sirdarieh; it was significantly hinted that the soldier's future prospects for the coveted post would not be prejudiced by present compliance with the Consul-General's request. With Grenfell's consent he accepted the proffered position, which was not just then being rendered easier by the "glorious uncertainty" of British policy, or by the unsparing exercise of the right of interference enjoyed by other European Powers.

The trouble in Egypt, as everywhere in the East, was to rescue individual liberty without undermining the foundation of public law. Much had been done to curb the arbitrary exercise of the power of the Police and to protect every citizen in the exercise of his rights. But the very reforms which secured this result tended to weaken authority. It was not easy to reconcile a jealous regard for individual freedom with a vigorous enforcement of order and a prompt repression of crime.

To diminish the authority of the provincial governors by substituting British supervision for native was not only to offend the Mudirs, but—which was worse—to sap their power of keeping order in their own districts. And justice suffered further from the arts of obstruction to which, in their resentment, the native officials had recourse.

The condition of the Police was such that no reform could take immediate effect. Kitchener held his post for little over a twelvemonth, but he managed to initiate a system which proved under his successor quite unexpectedly durable in a country so liable to drastic political experiments. The European Inspector-General, who had a force under him

of some 6500 men, was still to be officially subordinate to the Egyptian Minister of the Interior. For police purposes Egypt was divided into three districts, each with its Inspector supervising local sub-inspectors, who were nominally, and to an undefined extent actually, subject to the Mudirs. The latter, however, issued orders to them only through their British officers, who at first found it almost impossible to do their duty without treading on somebody's toes, the Egyptian officials wincing under the divided allegiance owned by the Police. By degrees, however, the Mudirs came to see that the Police were really supporting their authority, and the British officers on their side recognised more generously the claim of the Mudirs to consideration.

The results were favourable beyond expectation. At the close of 1891 it was found that serious crimes of every description had diminished by one-half during the preceding twelvemonth while the proportion of serious crimes sent for trial had increased fourfold; the convictions obtained had more than doubled, and the recovery of stolen property was becoming much more certain.

Kitchener would amend, rather than abolish, existing institutions. The village watchmen—or *ghaffirs*—were in ludicrous disproportion to the people they had to watch; they were cut down in number, but granted regular salaries. Under these new conditions the *ghaffirs* bestirred themselves to keep a vigilant eye on habitual criminals and suspected persons. The lawless Bedawin, numbering a quarter of a million, were to be looked after by a special Government department, and their sheikhs were vested with large authority and strict responsi-

bility—always with a view to the gradual civilisation of the tribes. The sheikhs responded readily to the call, and a new law of vagabondage tamed and controlled vagrants from Upper Egypt in search of work.

Baring, whose praise was always well considered, reported that the progress made in the Police Department reflected great credit on Colonel Kitchener and the officers under his command, the large majority of whom were natives.

In the early summer of 1891 Kitchener resumed the post of Adjutant-General, quietly lamenting that his Police functions had precluded him from any part in the recapture of Tokar with its consequent pacification of the Eastern Sudan.

CHAPTER XX

In April 1892 Sir Francis Grenfell resigned the Sirdarship of the Egyptian Army, and there arose the question of his successor. The favourite choice was probably Wodehouse, but Lord Cromer,[1] who had been narrowly watching Kitchener's work, was determined that a big man should eventually be matched with the big opportunity which would surely arrive, and threw all his influence into the scale for his nominee.

Kitchener was accordingly appointed, and bent himself at once to train, prepare, and fit out the army for the twofold mission which he knew that in time, even if not in his time, it would be called upon to fulfil. Gordon's blood pleaded for vengeance, and to a people enslaved in dark misery, light and liberty were long overdue.

The next four years were entirely devoted to getting the Egyptian Army into trim for its great task. "When will the British Government learn," Kitchener said on hearing of the Hicks disaster which he had anticipated, "that we are fighting, not mere fanatics, but men with a sort of thirst for death? It would take an expedition perfected in drill and with a proper tropical commissariat to tackle such an enemy."

Economy was never irksome to the new Sirdar, and with his eyes fixed on the future it was his

1 Sir Evelyn Baring was created Baron (June 1892), Viscount (1899), and Earl of Cromer (1901).

pleasure no less than his will to make the utmost of the material to his hand. Indeed, without a natural gift for persuading a sixpence to do the work of a shilling he might well have borrowed the Israelite protest against being sent to make bricks without straw.

The Army Budget and the destination of every military piastre were rigidly scrutinised by European Governments with whom our relations were somewhat tense, and whose representatives kept vigilant watch lest the establishment of the Egyptian Army should exceed by so much as a single drummer-boy the standard fixed by Treaty. Moreover, although Egypt herself was recuperating slowly under the supervision of English financial experts, her circumstances were still very straitened, and not one Egyptian guinea could figure on the estimates unless calculated to return its full value. The watchword was economy, and every piastre saved must be dedicated to public works, irrigation, and agriculture; nothing could be ear-marked for the future conquest of the Sudan. To maintain the Egyptian Army in being at all required sound business management. Kitchener not only kept it well up to the mark, but substantially increased its effectiveness and at the same time quietly filled a War Chest against The Day!

Month by month he was steadily accumulating material and closely husbanding his resources. He sent numbers of men to the reserve a year or even two years before their time, much to the perturbation of the commanding officers;[1] he saved clothing

1 "They cannot see an inch beyond their noses," he said to Hickman; "I am looking forward ten years!"

and equipment [1] and piled them up in the storehouses of the citadel; he put by piastres as carefully as pounds, and always he looked ahead. Part-worn clothing and leather-work, instead of being discarded as useless, were repaired in his workshops; with the money granted for clothing to be made of expensive British material he bought other clothing of cheaper yet serviceable stuff in the capitals of Europe, and when a multitude of other articles were needed he would not buy them at all, but set up looms and machinery for home make, sending his officers abroad to pick up any Continental wrinkles likely to be useful. Nothing was wasted; nothing was thrown away; everything was used until it almost fell to pieces, and then it was made up into something else.[2]

The training and discipline of the troops knew no relaxation; with Rundle as his Adjutant-General in 1892, the Sirdar was day in, day out, welding his miniature army into a first-class fighting machine. Of the fourteen battalions forming his force the first

1 Kitchener was fortunate in his Director of Stores, Lt.-Colonel W. S. Gordon, R.E., a nephew of the Hero of Khartum, who had already done him good service at Suakin. He jealously gave shape to his chief's economies and proposals for accumulating reserves, clothing, and stores. Gordon supervised equipment and controlled the supply of ordnance, and was as active in providing transport as in securing the men and material for the railway. Kitchener wrote to him from Dongola: "A great measure of the success of this Expedition has been due to you, and I wish to let you know how highly I appreciate the work you have done."

2 There was a legend current that the commanding officers of battalions came to the Sirdar in August and suggested that for accounts' purposes it would be much more convenient if the issues of clothing were made in January and July instead of in March and September. "Very good," said Kitchener, and ordered that the next issue should be made in January, thus saving one issue in the year. The commanding officers thereupon complained that their men were short of a suit, and, after putting their heads together, asked in June for a reversion in the following year to the old system. Their wishes were again considered, but he temporised with them over July and issued no clothing that month nor in August or September. A remonstrance provoked the obvious reply that by their own request the next issue was not due until the following March, and that they had thus saved two issues of clothing in a year!

eight were composed of Egyptian fellahin, and the other six of Sudanese blacks. When the hour struck for the advance three extra battalions were forthcoming—creatures of the Sirdar's forethought in sending men to the reserve before their due time. Three batteries of artillery and four squadrons of cavalry, with some cadres of transport and supply troops, completed the army; no Engineers figured at any time—they would be too expensive.

With his 18,000 men—the maximum allowed under the Treaties—the Sirdar was expected to defend Egypt against aggression, and later, with a stiffening of British troops, to destroy a host of bloodthirsty barbarians and to conquer a territory of nearly half a million square miles. It is therefore not amiss to take stock of the stuff of which the army was made up.

The bulk of the troops consisted necessarily of the Egyptian fellahin, a material which had been tested and found wanting. Whether in the two Expeditions sent in 1875 and 1876 against Abyssinia; or under Arabi in 1882 at Tel-el-Kebir; or in 1883 when 8000 under Hicks Pasha were cut down to the last man by the Mahdi's Sudanese; or at El Teb in the following year with Valentine Baker Pasha as their commander [1]—the fellahin soldiers had shown some very unsoldierly qualities. "The Egyptian Army is disbanded," ran the laconic British Order after Arabi's surrender in 1882; it was a delicate allusion to troops who had already disbanded themselves.

But if the old Egyptian Army could by no stretch of courtesy have been called an army of soldiers,

1 It is on record that just before Baker's expedition started Kitchener said, "I do not expect to see any of them return alive."

much excuse could be made for the men in its ranks. Unwilling conscripts, they had been dragged from their villages, herded together under incompetent officers, and treated like beasts. Half-starved, packed into filthy and insanitary barracks, robbed even of their poor pittance of pay, kicked and abused by their superiors, they abhorred military service in general and service in the Sudan in particular, from which, indeed, few returned to tell their tale. Small wonder that to avoid conscription they would cut off their fingers or more often sacrifice an ophthalmic eye, and that at first they firmly believed the new army would repeat the hateful régime familiar to them.

But when they found that, instead of being bullied and buffeted, they were treated by their English officers not only humanely but with consideration for individual feelings, a change quickly came over them. When they realised that they were looked after when sick, were given their pay regularly, were decently dressed, and, above all, were allowed leave at regular intervals to visit their families, their self-respect began to revive. They assumed the correct military swagger, took every opportunity of showing themselves off, and actually began to enlist their relations when, with money chinking in their pockets, they returned to their native villages. Gradually the idea of their dignity spread, and with it the regard for discipline. They enjoyed their drill, like a new toy, and even took to drilling each other out of parade hours.

The novel treatment, however effectual, would not of itself suffice to turn a peace-loving peasant into a fine fighting man; but the British officers soon saw

encouraging signs that when a later and greater test should come the new army would show a new spirit. In the Nile Expedition of 1884–85 a few battalions did quite good service on the lines of communication; and in the engagements which followed after our retirement from the Sudan the Egyptian troops acquitted themselves with increasing credit. But what little fighting there was during the long years of frontier warfare was done rather by the Black than by the Yellow, battalions.

The native officers, too, were an unknown quantity. Fairly intelligent and quick to pick up the rudiments of soldiering, their mentality was a perpetual puzzle to their British comrades, who could not appreciate the subtleties of Oriental reasoning. The Egyptian officer was always anxious to please his superiors and quite willing to let two and two make five or three and a half; but the ordinary laws of logic were unfamiliar to him, and he would often unexpectedly solve a problem by methods difficult of apprehension by his plain British instructor.

The first four battalions were officered by British as well as by Egyptians, but the last four were commanded entirely by native officers. No Egyptian, however, could rise beyond the rank of Kaimakam (Lieutenant-Colonel) in the command of troops, and the very few natives who held higher rank were at Court, or in the enjoyment of administrative appointments.

No greater contrast could exist than that between the well-built, healthy, sturdy fellah, with his patient ways and infinite capacity for physical labour, and the long, narrow, excitable black, always keen to be at hand-grips in the forefront of the battle, a fighter

by instinct, though a bad shot—an unruly but lovable child, gallant to the death, and blindly devoted to his British officers.[1]

The troops who were garrisoning the frontier posts came no farther north than Assuan, for the lungs of these children of the sun were too delicate for the chills of even a Cairo winter. Black as a polished boot, yet with a curious tinge of blue,[2] they were largely recruited from the stock of the negroes who had fought for Gordon in 1884–85. They or their fathers had mostly come from the marshes or plains of the Upper Nile and Sobat—Shilluks, Dinkas, Nuers, Bari, Anuak, with a few Nubas from Southern Kordofan. There were also a number of negroes from lower Egypt who had served in Arabi's Army, ex-slaves (or their progeny) of Ismail's period, picked up anywhere and anyhow by the recruiting-sergeants.

Attached to each battalion was a quota of dusky dames—wives by courtesy, cooks and housekeepers by occupation—who carried out the ordinary duties of grinding and cooking their masters' food and "doing for" them generally. In time of war they

1 At the battle of Argin in 1889, a British officer found himself alone with his company of Sudanese in an extremely unfavourable position and with his back to the river. The Dervishes, in far superior numbers, were advancing on him at a run, spears shaking, tomtoms beating, flags waving; and the officer could *not* get his men to occupy their trenches. Madly excited, they were shouting at each other and yelling war-songs at the tops of their voices, when suddenly they broke off, formed a large ring round their officer, and deaf to his frantic protests, danced round him, brandishing their rifles and spears. By this time the Dervishes were only 100 yards off, and the blacks at last condescended to notice them. They jumped into their trenches, fired one scattered and ill-directed volley, and then went "over the top" without further word of command. Five minutes later most of the Dervishes lay stretched or kicking on the sand, and the remainder were scudding in the direction of the setting sun.

2 They preferred being called "blue men"—"Ana ragul azrak, mush aswad" ("I am a blue, not a black, man").

were of course not allowed with the troops, who, much to their disgust, had to look after themselves; but in peace time the ladies—unless distances were prohibitive—accompanied their lords from garrison to garrison. If the march were too long—as for instance, from Suakin to the Nile—the ladies left behind resigned themselves complacently to being taken over as chattels of the incoming battalion.

These black battalions had each a complement of six or seven carefully selected British officers, the remaining officers being mostly black. They had one and all distinguished themselves in frontier fighting —the IXth, indeed, ever since the fight at Ginniss in 1885 considered themselves blood-brothers of the Cameron Highlanders, whose bagpipes they even adopted. They were well commanded and trained, and their fighting reputation was beyond doubt; though there was some cause for anxiety whether in the excitement of battle they would be steady enough to obey orders. But the experience of battle showed that no such qualms need have been felt; the steadiness of MacDonald's brigade at Omdurman, when changing front to a flank under heavy fire and threatened by an immediate attack, was an example for any European troops to follow.

The artillery consisted mostly of Egyptians, and was the *corps d'élite*—it numbered but three batteries; the four smart squadrons of cavalry, well mounted on Syrian Arab horses, were also Egyptian. Some doubts were at first expressed how far these horsemen would be individually reliable: the Dervish, indeed, was wont to refer to them scornfully as "a gift from God." But actual fighting soon established the value of the "gift," and the Dervish

who had jeered at his mounted opponent soon found it advisable to keep out of his way.

The British Staff of the Army was very small but very efficient. The British officers, with a sprinkling of N.C.O.'s, numbered altogether barely sixty, but, picked with scrupulous care from a long list of applicants, they formed a brilliant little body of thoroughly professional soldiers in closest touch with their men and devoted to their work. Each year when Kitchener went to England on leave he would himself interview every candidate, and hardly a single officer reached the Egyptian Army without having undergone a searching personal examination at his hands. They were engaged for two years at a time, they received excellent pay—the juniors starting on £450 per annum—and they were expected, and never failed, to give good value for good money. The inflexible rule of celibacy had a double meaning. Beside the obvious reason that active service was the better for being free from domestic ties, there was the consideration that so long as a goodly crop of eligible bachelors seemed to be forthcoming it was not fair to impose on wives the anxiety and distress which long drawn-out campaigns are prone to entail.

CHAPTER XXI

Little of interest occurred up the Nile or in the Sudan during the first two years of Kitchener's Sirdarieh. Two small but daring Dervish raids on villages on the eastern bank just north of Halfa, followed in July 1893 by an attempt on Beris, a village 230 miles within Egyptian territory, fluttered the natives a good deal. But, though rumours were rife of an important advance, nothing serious happened, and a few blockhouses at threatened points served to restore confidence. Raids of course could not be prevented. Travelling fast and by unknown tracks over the Western desert, a small body of horsemen or camel-men would descend by night on a peaceful village, cut a few throats, murder a few women and children, and hurry off with twenty or thirty head of cattle before the sun rose, and before any rumour of their arrival had reached the troops. The dry desert was the safeguard to the Western flank, but there were some wells still unknown to us, though known to the Dervish, and along paths so little defined that only an Arab could follow them he would make his malignant way. The villagers lived on the edge of their nerves, and at intervals the inhabitants of a district, seized with a sudden panic, would migrate *en bloc* to the other side of the Nile. But only for a

time; the abandoned crops called pitifully for water, and the Berberis would yield to their agricultural instincts and return to take their chance again.

On the Suakin side things were fairly quiet, as Osman Digna, after the capture of Tokar in 1891, had lain low and discredited on the Atbara. But in the winter of 1892–93 he travelled to Omdurman and asked the Khalifa to let him attack a small post on the Suakin—Berber road. With or without his master's leave he turned up again in the Suakin district at the head of a small force and made himself a great nuisance. He kept our patrols busy some months all the winter and often barely escaped their clutches. The natives, however, made him well aware that he and his bandits had nothing to expect from them, and in the late spring he retired to the Atbara.

Meanwhile the Khalifa was getting nervous about his position, and took such drastic measures as his uneasy conscience suggested to assert himself. The Khalifa Sherif, who had certainly been guilty of challenging his authority, was thrown into prison. This was a startlingly impious act, and Abdullah seemed almost to be dropping his cloak of religion, for the Sherif had been formally appointed by the Mahdi to the next reversion of the leadership of the faithful. Abdullah, however, took great credit for his moderation in not having crucified his antagonist and in having merely banished the Sherif's emirs to the upper Nile.

The next name in the succession was that of Ali Wad Helu, who, having no wish to pose as a hero or martyr, held his tongue and hid himself. The Khalifa, having further exhibited his sovereign

powers by many acts of brutality, ordered a big wall to be built around Omdurman, took a holiday, waxed literally fat, and indulged in every kind of debauchery.

Underlying all the Sirdar's preparations was the military intelligence wrought by Colonel Wingate—with but slender financial resources—into a subtle system, perfected in every detail. His secret service honeycombed the Sudan, and in the guise of merchants, holy men, artisans, wandering beggars, and even women, his spies penetrated the fastnesses of Dervishdom, and brought back inside information acquired at first-hand or derived from paid and unpaid agents in Omdurman and elsewhere. Among the latter, the most important were a few white men and women left in the capital, some Greek and Austrian priests and nuns captured in Gordon's time, the German prisoner Neufeld, and, more especially, Slatin Bey, late Governor of Darfur, who, after several years in chains, had been appointed Mulazim (aide-de-camp) and general European adviser to the Khalifa.

Of the whites only two had so far escaped, Father Rossignoli and Father Ohrwalder, the latter a worthy Bavarian priest, who with Wingate's powerful help had reached Cairo in 1891. His graphic story of what was happening in the Sudan fitted in with the answers which Wingate elicited from the natives who trickled in. There was no room for doubt as to the dominion of barbarism which the Bagara and other tribes of evil repute had brought about in the Sudan. Thanks to the Intelligence Department, we were admirably primed as to what was going on inside the enemy's lines, whether on

the Nile, or in the eastern and western deserts, or in the countries far beyond, even to Wadai and the boundaries of the Congo.

While the Sirdar and the Khalifa were alike preparing for the trial of strength, there occurred an unpleasant incident which, but for prompt treatment, might have had very unpleasant consequences. Since his accession as Khedive in 1892 Abbas Hilmi Pasha, who was by no means "a chip of the old block," had been increasingly restless, and had showed fitful and fretful symptoms of a desire to throw off the British control under which his dominions were working out their salvation. He tried rather clumsily to ingratiate himself with the French at our expense, and he lent a ready ear to the impetuous youths who were already clearing their throats for the cry of "Egypt for the Egyptians." The unrest permeated the public offices, and British functionaries became uncomfortably aware of a feeling that they were being obstructed in all sorts of petty ways in the performance of their duties. Obstruction in such offices as Public Works and Finance was irritating rather than injurious, but any attempt to tamper with the Army was fraught with danger and not to be tolerated.

One Maher Pasha had been appointed Under-Secretary of War on the recommendation of the British authorities, who, finding him, as they thought, a loyal, capable, and trustworthy man, wished to show their appreciation of merits all too rare. As usual, the devious windings of the Oriental mind were more than a match for British plain-dealing, and thus Maher was able for some time,

without even incurring suspicion, to tickle the ears of the Khedive, to intrigue with the Nationalists, and to foment a spirit of military indiscipline. The day of reckoning came when the Khedive announced his intention of inspecting the troops both in Egypt and on the frontier. Every preparation was made to do him honour, but by an accident of fortune there fell into the hands of the Sirdar's Staff a copy of the Khedive's confidential programme which revealed His Highness's set purpose of making disparaging remarks on the Army in *crescendo* as he proceeded up-stream.

At first the document was considered a forgery, but as the tour proceeded the Khedive's actual conduct was found to correspond accurately with it, and the British Agent, learning of the pretty plot, hastened to assure the Sirdar that if he had to put down his foot, the whole weight of Her Majesty's Government would be with him.

For the final review at Halfa the Khedive took up his station at the saluting base. The first Egyptian battalion, a very smart unit under a British Commanding Officer, marched past in perfect array. The Khedive thereupon turned to the Sirdar and found fault with both marching and turn-out, declaring that the C.O. should be reprimanded for it. Kitchener, willing to try mild measures, merely protested that this was one of his best battalions, when the Khedive cut him short: "*I* know what marching should be. I have been brought up at the Theresianum in Vienna, and I tell you this marching is a disgrace!" He then pointed to a battalion officered only by Egyptians. "Look at this battalion. That is what I call good marching." The criticisms were at least

consistent, for each British-led battalion was abused and each purely native battalion was belauded. Before the parade was over the Khedive made a particularly outrageous remark on British discipline, upon which the Sirdar quietly said, "As Your Highness is evidently displeased with the efforts of myself and the British officers in training your Army, nothing remains for me but to place my own resignation, and that of all the British officers, in your hands." The Khedive was startled; he flushed scarlet, stammered out that he had not meant to convey quite so severe a reproof, and clumsily tried to excuse himself. But Kitchener was adamant; he broke off the parade and rode away, leaving a chattering and excited crowd around the saluting point and taking good care to spread the story among his officers.

That evening a banquet was given by the Khedive to the Army, but the princely host was suffering from a "severe headache brought on by the sun," and remained on board his dahabieh. The British officers were—by order—in poor spirits and spoke no word to their native neighbours. The feast was as lively as a funeral. Meanwhile, a Staff officer had been sent post-haste to report the incident in detail at Cairo, and within two days Lord Cromer informed the Khedive that, unless he at once published a dictated order expressing his complete satisfaction with the discipline and training of his Army as carried out by his British officers, his immediate abdication would be required. The Khedive blustered, turned to his people for support, found none, and surrendered at discretion.

His authority had suffered a serious blow; that

of the British had gained immeasurably. There was no further obstruction; Maher was dismissed; the Egyptians vied with each other in placating the superior Power; and the Sirdar became Sir Herbert Kitchener, K.C.M.G.

CHAPTER XXII

The Khedive having been brought to his bearings and the authority of the British officers duly vindicated, the Army withdrew from the limelight and went on with its training. The Sirdar's devotion to his troops and care for their requirements did not prevent his taking part in the social life of Cairo. He fully realised his responsibilities in this respect, and he spared no pains to live up to the reputation which Grenfell had earned. At the Sirdarieh he entertained freely and frequently, and his hospitality was enjoyed by Egyptians and Europeans alike. Clubs and theatre had little attraction, but he was actively interested in polo, and snatched every opportunity for a shooting trip; nor did archaeology forfeit its old attractions for him. He cared nothing for horse-racing, but a great deal for horses, and he did much in the provinces to stimulate breeding from pure Arab strain. He loved his garden, working in it himself, and was always willing to make his friends free of its flowers. Egypt was the real love of his early, middle, and late life; Cairo he regarded as his home, and he bought and cultivated an island near Assuan. He had no thought of exchanging the East for the West, and had already begun to wonder whether in years to come the Sirdarieh would prove

to have been the stepping-stone to the Agency at Cairo or to the Embassy at Constantinople.

For some time after Kitchener's accession to military command there was outwardly a lull in Sudan affairs. The Suakin side was lapped in unusual repose, and on the Nile frontier, except for raids and rumours of raids, the country was fairly peaceful. Yet from an unexpected quarter a storm centre was approaching, and events were so shaping themselves as to hasten the deliverance of the Sudan and to put a much earlier term than could have been anticipated to the Dervish reign of terror.

Since 1891 the Italians had been steadily increasing their sphere of operations from Massawa on the Red Sea. By a protocol of April 15 of that year the northern frontier of their new colony of Eritrea had been defined as starting from Ras Kasar on the coast, proceeding in a south-westerly direction to the Atbara, and passing to the east of Kassala. A further proviso authorised them to wrest Kassala from the Dervishes, and with it to occupy a small section of Egyptian territory, which, however, they were to hand over to Egypt when wanted.

During 1893 the Dervishes, alarmed at the growth of Italian power, determined to invade Eritrea, and in November a force of 12,000 was sent to attack Agordat, an Italian post 120 miles from Massawa. Here, however, they caught a Tartar in Colonel Arimondi, who, with a small native force of about 2000 men, inflicted a severe castigation, killing the Dervish leader, Ahmed Ali, and scattering his followers to the winds. This upset, which occurred at the end of December, made a considerable stir at Omdurman, and every effort was made to reinforce

Kassala; but six months later Colonel Baratieri, after a fine forced march from Agordat, surprised and took the town, which he at once fortified and held for over three years.

The Khalifa fumed and foamed, and ordered Ahmed Fedil and Osman Digna to retake Kassala. But though much was said, nothing was done, and the Khalifa made up his mind that he must look for a great combined attack from east and north. He then set himself to store grain and arms at Omdurman; he convoked his warriors, concreted his walls, and composed himself for a determined resistance. The escape of Slatin in February 1895, cleverly engineered by Wingate, further enraged him, and his subsequent misfortunes he attributed to the valuable information the Austrian had taken to Cairo.

In July 1895 Lord Salisbury's Ministry came into office. The Conservative leaders, who had censured the tardiness of the attempt to relieve Gordon, but had condoned the rapidity of our retreat from Dongola, were now hinting at an eventual return up the Nile. But this was not to be yet, for, confronted in October with the alternative of allocating a considerable sum of money either to the Assuan Dam or to a possible Nile Expedition, the Cabinet plumped for the former, and Lord Cromer was told that "there is not at present any prospect of the Government consenting to the despatch of an Expedition to the Sudan."

Circumstances, however, alter cases, and England was looking with a benevolent eye on Italy's efforts in Eritrea against the Abyssinians. It did not seem quite fair that the Italians, whilst holding their own

against the mountaineers, should have their western flank threatened by the Dervish, whom we regarded as our own particular enemy. An idea was mooted as early as January 1896 that we might help our friends by a demonstration in force—but only a demonstration—on the Nile. The matter was hung up for the time being; but when, on March 1, the news was flashed home of the Italian *débâcle* at Adua, the Cabinet, in an access of fervour, swung round and decided, not on a demonstration but on a genuine, and immediate, advance in force.

Adowa

Seldom has so important a decision been taken in such haste. To the authorities in Egypt it came as a bolt out of the blue when on March 13 a Reuter's telegram in the *Times*—dated from Cairo, but given to that journal from Downing Street—announced that the Government had decided to expedite a force for the reconquest of the Dongola province.

The official telegram reached Kitchener at 3 o'clock that same morning and drew him from his bed to seek Lord Cromer. Together they proceeded to take the necessary steps for the mobilisation of the Army, and the necessary financial measures attendant. They worked at high pressure for several hours, issuing orders in all directions, when the British Agent and Consul-General suddenly remembered that he had not observed the formality of informing the Khedive. Surely in no land but the Land of Paradox could British officials have calmly disposed of the resources of the army of a country not even under their Protectorate without the sanction or even the cognisance of the ruler, and the incident lights up the predominance of British control in a country where, in a strictly legal and international sense, Great Britain

was of no more account than any other European nation. Happily the Khedive was not an early riser, and "the Lord,"[1] on arrival at the Palace, was relieved on finding himself the first to announce to his Highness that the Khedivial troops were about to be actively engaged.

Another anomaly seems to have arisen with respect to the command of the Expedition. While the British Government were wiring to Lord Cromer that "they were prepared to sanction the reoccupation of Dongola"—a strange paraphrase of their own decision to do so without consulting anybody—the Secretary-of-State for War was on March 12 wiring to Major-General Knowles, then commanding the British garrison in Egypt, to ask him whether *he* could push on to Akasha with the present garrison at Wadi Halfa—which was not under his orders—and whether *he* could make a demonstration towards Abu Hamed.

Incidentally Knowles was told to consult the Sirdar, but for three days he was the recipient of all the instructions for the impending campaign, the War Office having apparently forgotten that as the Egyptian Army was to fight it would be for the Sirdar to command it. Whether there really was such a lapse of memory, or whether there was an idea of sending out Sir Francis Grenfell to direct operations, or whether the Foreign Office and the War Office were playing at cross-purposes, is a point never elucidated, but on March 16 the tenor of the telegrams to Knowles suddenly changed, and he was told, "You will, of course, understand that the Sirdar is responsible for all arrangements as to advance

[1] Always so called—"el Lurd"—by the natives.

of Egyptian troops," and "Consult Lord Cromer as to North Staffordshire Regiment." Four days later all initiative was taken away from Knowles by the peremptory direction, "All orders for advance to Akasha will be given by Baring (*sic*) to Sirdar . . . your duty will be limited to moving one English battalion to Wadi Halfa when asked to do so by Lord Cromer."

As copies of the War Office telegrams were only handed to Kitchener a week later, he remained in happy ignorance of any designs at home until Cromer had tactfully adjusted the position and assured him that the General who had trained the men should be the man to lead them.

CHAPTER XXIII

The campaign now inaugurated[1] was surely without parallel as regards the hierarchy of command, and nothing short of perfect understanding and loyalty rendered workable the peculiar relations between Cromer and Kitchener. From beginning to end the Sirdar was under the orders of the British Agent; the War Office only spoke when spoken to and accepted no responsibility. To Kitchener fell the executive, but in Cromer was vested absolute control, and the civilian whose early military experience had been wholly negligible could approve or disapprove every movement or time-table which the soldier might suggest. To and through the Agency passed all demands for men, materials, stores, and money, and the Agent's endorsement was all that was required to assure their delivery.

But Cromer knew his subordinate *au fond*. He knew also that the River War would be mainly a matter of transport and supply, and he set himself to facilitate these and to watch the progress of the campaign. "I abstained," he wrote, "from mischievous activity, and I acted as a check on the interference of others." Elasticity was of the essence

1 There exists no official history of the Omdurman campaign, but Mr. Churchill's admirable *River War* stands as a most valuable record.

of the scheme, and Cromer willingly allowed Kitchener, when necessary, to communicate directly with agents in England, with the War Office, and even with the Admiralty—reserving to himself the final word for every transaction and every important move. He left to the Commander in the field the same free hand which he himself obtained from the Cabinet. Complete accord between two strong men —backed as they were at home by a strong Prime Minister—was the underlying secret of ultimate success in operations which lasted for over two years and had their full meed of difficulties, doubts, and disappointments. If Kitchener's genius for organisation overcome every obstacle in the path to victory, Cromer's whole-hearted and unswerving support nerved him for each and every effort.[1]

Strategy for the reconquest of the Sudan was largely determined by the Home Government's insistence on the occupation of the Dongola province. Many men suggested many ways to Omdurman, and professional soldiers and amateur strategists were alike vocal on the subject. The veteran Sir Samuel Baker, in a long letter written to Kitchener immediately after his appointment to the Sirdarieh, urged a simultaneous advance from Korosko across the desert to Abu Hamed, and from Suakin to Kokreb (on the way to Berber), steamers in sections being at the same time sent overland to Kassala, whence they were to descend the Atbara. There

1 "Every one worked with the utmost resolution during the two-and-a-half years we were engaged towards the great end we had before us, and it was to that oneness of purpose and cheerful determination that I think the success of the campaign was greatly due. For a great enterprise a master mind is necessary. Lord Cromer was our master, and it was due to his able direction that the reconquest of the Sudan was accomplished." (Lord Kitchener at the Guildhall, November 4, 1898.)

were devotees of the Nile route throughout; Lord Wolseley was himself careful not to press the river on Kitchener, and told him he should decide for himself. Other advisers urged a feint on the Nile while a march was made from Suakin to Berber.

The selection was made neither easily nor early, and in 1894 Kitchener was said to have submitted startling proposals to the military authorities in Pall Mall, and even to have given orders for a railway to be built up the Khor[1] Baraka from Tokar. Neither proposals nor orders were put into effect—the latter indeed being intended probably as a blind—and before the actual instructions to occupy Dongola were given the Sirdar had worked out with mathematical precision his calculations for arriving there.

On March 16 a small column of mixed troops started from Wadi Halfa with orders to seize Akasha—a village on the Nile, some 75 miles south of Halfa, which for many years had formed the main advanced post of the Dervishes. There was no opposition on the road; Akasha was successfully occupied on the 20th and a week later formed by General Hector MacDonald into a strong entrenched camp as the advanced base for further movements. The rest of the Egyptian Army was being brought forward as quickly as train and boat could move them, and the British battalion (North Staffords) was sent up to act as garrison at Wadi Halfa, the whole line of communication being in thorough working order by the end of the month.

All-important was the question of transport; to supply a force of 15,000 men along one narrow rocky

[1] Khor = a shallow depression.

valley, and on one bank of the river only, without congestions and breakdowns, early tested the Sirdar's reputation as an organiser in the field. A continuous stream of supplies, stores, ammunition, and railway material reached Halfa by river from Shellal, to which point the railway ran from Lower Egypt, with a gap between Luxor and Assuan; but beyond Halfa the only means of land transport was a stretch of 33 miles of antiquated railway-line to Sarras. The engines were few in number and more venerable than reliable; the rails and sleepers had been in position since 1885 and badly needed renewal; but there was no money to hand. Nor did any railway corps exist, for with the exception of two or three British R.E. officers, the Egyptian Army was still destitute of Engineers. Everything had to be extemporised. The old rails beyond Sarras, which had been lying about in the sand and sun since 1885, were picked up, straightened out, and relaid by a scratch crowd of Sudanese, Dervish prisoners, and Egyptians, working under directors scarcely more expert than themselves. Little by little the line lengthened. Some new rails, sleepers, and fishplates did eventually arrive; instruction-classes were started, and the men were eager to learn. It was hard work. Old stuff had to be used again and again; patched, repaired, and broken material had to do duty for new.

It may not be known [wrote an officer on Kitchener's staff a little later] that K. ran the Dongola Expedition on the old railway material abandoned after the Wolseley Expedition of 1884. His early R.E. training stood him in good stead, and no one else could have made such use of the extraordinary material lying about. Rails were dragged

out of mud-huts, where they had for many years done duty as rafters,[1] railway fastenings used as kitchen-grates were collected, and everything of the least use was hunted out and worked in.

The advent of a brand-new locomotive was greeted with rapturous cheers, and great was the exultation when the railway overhauled the strings of camels which plodded forward and backward along the river-banks between Halfa and Akasha.

As regards men and money, the rigid economies of the last four years had resulted in three reserve battalions (one black, XIVth Sudanese, and two yellow, 15th and 16th Battalions), four squadrons, and some Camel Corps, which a sum of about £20,000 —the scrapings of the meagre Army budgets— served to equip.

The Sirdar was naturally anxious to get all his fighting men as soon as possible to the front, and sent for the Suakin garrison (1st Egyptians and IXth and Xth Sudanese) to join him by march route from Kosseir to Keneh. The IXth Sudanese started, but before the remainder could follow Osman Digna was again at his tricks in the neighbourhood of Suakin. A demonstration in force, intended to intimidate him, was disappointing, and at Khor Wintri on April 15 the situation was rather narrowly saved by the gallantry of the British officers. As it was impossible to entrust the defence of Suakin to the one new battalion (16th) of elderly Egyptian reservists which had replaced the Sudanese garrison, India was asked to send a native brigade there to liberate the garrison for service up the Nile. The

1 One rail had a gruesome story, having been used by the Dervishes as a gallows!

request, with financial limitations, was granted, and the brigade remained there and at Tokar for some months a prey to scurvy, sand-flies, and dust-storms, without firing a shot, yet rendering good service withal.

Through April and May went on the weary work of laying communications, only relieved by one little cavalry fight, while 3000 Dervishes were lying in wait at Firket, fifteen miles from Akasha. Kitchener was anxious to deal with these quickly and thoroughly, and having concentrated his force in Akasha sent Colonel Burn-Murdoch early on June 6 with a mounted column to make a wide sweep and come in on the south of the village. He himself led out three brigades in the afternoon along the river-bank, and after a brief night march over rocky ground arrived at the defile between Firket Mountain and the river just before dawn. Much depended on the accuracy of Burn-Murdoch's timing, and as the critical hour for his first action in command of a large body of troops approached, the Sirdar was manifestly anxious at the non-appearance of the mounted brigade. The master mind had timed the movements to perfection, and the British officers and their men did the rest. Burn-Murdoch turned up at the right moment and at the right place, and slipped down towards the river south of the village to cut off the enemy. The three brigades, undetected by the Dervish outposts, deployed from the narrow defile unmolested and bore down swiftly on the dim village from the north and north-east. The outlying forts and houses were easily taken, and Dervishes in hundreds, mown down by the infantry fire, bit the dust. Eight hundred dead and five hundred wounded were

picked up, our own losses amounting to one British officer killed, twenty men killed, and eighty-three wounded.

Kitchener had struck a sharp, well-timed, and well-placed blow and had badly damaged his enemy. The moral effect of the fight was first-rate and far-reaching; the Egyptian troops had come victorious out of the fray; they had justified the confidence of their officers and had acquired, as a most valuable asset, confidence in themselves. And the news of the Dervish reverse re-echoing through the Sudan was infinitely detrimental to Dervish prestige, and knocked some nails into the coffin of the Khalifa's hopes.

CHAPTER XXIV

Two days after the fight the head of the Expedition was moved to Suarda, some thirty miles up-stream, where the advanced post was established under MacDonald. But wearing and worrying weeks were in store. For the advance to Dongola, land no less than water transport was necessary, and very laboriously the railway pushed its way up to Kosheh, now the advanced base, where supplies and workshops accumulated. Among the freight were huge and cumbrous sections of the new Thubron steel stern-wheel gunboats which, designed in Cairo and built in England, were to be launched at Kosheh and to figure largely in the reduction of Dongola—timed for high Nile about September. But before these fine boats could be put on the water there were to be many untoward phenomena. During June the cholera worked its way up the Nile and by the middle of July had reached the camp at Kosheh, where it raged for ten days and took toll of 19 British and 260 native officers and men, besides a large number of camp followers.

This was only the first of a series of buffets aimed by the evil spirits of the Sudan at the invading white man; there ensued a forty days' strike of those north winds which within living memory had regularly

blown at this season, and on which the Sirdar relied to bring up his supply-boats from Halfa. Not only did the cool helpful breezes fail; their place was taken by a succession of scorching dust-laden blasts from the south which played havoc with his calculations, as the boats, with only sail-power to help them, could make no headway.

The elements continued to be ingeniously contrary. In mid-August a brief spell of northerly airs had no sooner lured MacDonald's brigade to set out on a 21-mile desert march to Absarat than the wind suddenly fell, and a white heat—unrelieved by any water-supply, no camels being procurable—so affected the troops that many fell exhausted and some fell victims to apoplexy, the brigade straggling into camp in a state approaching collapse.

But worse was to follow. Sinister influences seemed bent on playing upon the whole gamut of heart-breaking weather. To reinforce MacDonald at Absarat Lewis's brigade had no sooner started to cross the 37-mile desert between Kosheh and Saadin Fanti than another fiery blast set in from the south, aggravated by a whirlwind of sand and followed by two successive tempests of rain. The subsidence of the second deluge had barely permitted a move to be made when, with diabolical reiteration, a third tempest forced 300 men back to Kosheh and prostrated 1700 more. Out of one battalion of 700 men only 60 reached their destination when expected.

These calamities generated an evil offspring. The violent rain-storms produced floods and torrents such as the Sudan had not known for fifty years. Twelve whole miles of the railway were washed away, and the work of weeks was destroyed in a few

hours. But for the presence of mind and organising capacity of the Sirdar, who knew the whereabouts of every man and camel on his long line, the disaster must have been serious to desperation. He heard of the news at Kosheh, and riding through the night arrived at Akasha at dawn. Off went his coat, and with only such tools and material as could be found in the débris, and with such men as he could scrape together, he set to work, personally laying out curves, helping, encouraging, and inspiring his followers with his own contempt for fatigue. With amazing rapidity he rushed up several thousand men—and their food—to the damaged section and made them busy. It was a nice question of time whether the railway could be repaired, or whether the Army, shorn of its supplies at Kosheh, must be ordered back. With toil and sweat the line was repaired within a week; but valuable days had been lost, and the demons of the Sudan may well have chuckled as they devised their crowning piece of spite.

There was not a minute to spare if high Nile were to serve. Early in September two brigades were pushed 20 miles forward to Dulgo, where by the 10th the main force was concentrated. It consisted of thirteen battalions in four brigades, eight squadrons, six companies of Camel Corps, and four batteries of Artillery, with the 1st North Staffords in reserve. They were supported by a flotilla of three armed steamers and four old gunboats, 90 feet long, and —most important of all—one brand-new gunboat, the *Zafir,* the pride of the Army, the darling of the Sirdar. She was 140 feet long and mounted a 12-pounder, two 6-pounders, and four maxims.

By extraordinary exertions the *Zafir* had been

built in London in eight weeks, then taken to pieces, brought out to the Sudan, and put together again on the Nile in time to take part in the assault on Dongola. Hers was to be the leading part in reducing the Dervish forts on the river, and high hopes hung on her potentiality. Yet on September 11, the day before the general advance was fixed, the spirits of mischief, with devilish precision, played their worst trick on the Expedition.

With the Sirdar and Staff, and the officer commanding the whole flotilla [1] on board, the *Zafir* put off majestically from the shore. But hardly had she gone twenty yards into the stream when a loud explosion announced that her low-pressure cylinder had burst beyond repair!

The Sirdar's disappointment was acute. Month after month, and day by day, he had striven to get his force into perfect trim for the final advance. Difficulties and disappointments had been piled one on another, and this disappointment was one of the worst. For once his composure deserted him. With steady eyes but twitching mouth he gave the necessary orders for transferring the guns to the other steamers, and then disappeared into his cabin. But he quickly reappeared, calm and grimly determined that the Expedition, though bereft of a powerful engine of war, must proceed forthwith. By September 18 he was within striking distance of Kerma, the strongly-held advance post of the Dervish force on the eastern side of the river.

The enemy had during the summer been lulled to inaction by extravagant versions of the disasters sustained by the advancing "Turks." They had been

1 Commander, later Admiral, the Hon. Sir Stanley Colville.

annihilated by disease; the Sirdar was the only man left in the force; their entire fleet, camels, and railways had been destroyed in the terrific storms; everything went to assure the faithful that Allah was fighting for them. Wad Bishara, the energetic young emir in command at Dongola, had tried to put his province in a state of defence; he had built and armed some river forts, but his guns were few, and of his 5000 men many were wobbling in their allegiance. He had much ado to persuade his patrols even to cut telegraph wires which hung temptingly from poles in the desert—an innocuous proceeding, as the real cable, hidden by Kitchener, lay under the banks, and sometimes in the water, of the Nile itself.

Before daylight on the 19th the Egyptian force moved to attack Kerma; but it was soon found that the enemy had, during the night, shipped himself bodily to the opposite bank and retired six miles to Hafir. Preceded by the gunboats, which came under a hot fire from mud-forts, the infantry came into action along the shore with their yelling foes on the opposite bank, where 1500 black riflemen from Dongola gave not very effective support from bank and palm-tops to the Dervish spearmen. Our gunboats steamed close in, and the North Staffords on board dosed the trenches with gun and rifle fire. Wingate and Hunter, in a small stern-wheeler, moving in for a reconnaissance at close quarters, ran aground in a shallow *cul-de-sac,* and passed a very uncomfortable quarter of an hour before the boat could back out under a spray of ill-directed bullets.

The Dervish guns made better practice against the other three steamers, which being holed several times

were drawn off. Colville, among others, having been hit, Lieut. D. Beatty, R.N.,[1] was now senior Naval Officer, and at his instance a daring manœuvre was carried out, all three boats going full speed ahead, running the gauntlet of the batteries on shore and steaming straight for Dongola.

Bishara was already wounded, and although his men stuck pluckily to their trenches under the assiduous attentions of our little field-guns, his Dervishes, under cover of night, bolted back to Dongola, abandoning their boats, crammed with grain and other stores, and leaving Kitchener free to proceed towards Dongola without risk to his communications.

During the next two days the Egyptian Army crossed the Nile and moved on a dozen miles, Beatty's gunboats keeping up a desultory fire on the town and entrenchments of Dongola. By the night of the 22nd the Sirdar had regained touch with the enemy, and before noon the next day the Bagara horsemen had made a few futile charges, the Dervish footmen had drawn sullenly off, and at a very low price in casualties Dongola was in his hands.

The Dervishes were hunted up to the base of the Fourth Cataract and to the confines of the Bayuda desert, when the campaign was adjourned for a twelvemonth. But the story of our achievement was noised afar, and in Omdurman may well have caused chill forebodings.

1 Afterwards Admiral-of-the-Fleet Earl Beatty.

CHAPTER XXV

The chief difficulties to be reckoned with in the recovery of the Sudan were those presented by nature rather than by the enemy. Once brought into contact with the Dervishes, a sufficiently strong and well-equipped force was fairly sure to master them. The delivery and supply of the troops in the theatre of war constituted the real problem, rendered the more complex by the shortage of cash.

From Cairo to Khartum, as the crow flies, is just a thousand miles, the Korti—Abu Hamed bend making the river route considerably longer. Even now, three more bad cataracts would have to be negotiated before the smooth water to Khartum was reached, and there were not enough steamers to embark 15,000 men with stores and munitions. On the other hand, the land route was unfitted for wheeled transport, bare of supplies, and waterless apart from the Nile.

Until anything like decisive touch should be obtained with the enemy, the Generalissimo really became his own glorified Quartermaster-General, and left many tactical details to be worked out by his subordinates. The chief of these was Major-General Sir Archibald Hunter,[1] summoned from the command of the Frontier Force to lead the Egyptian

1 Later General Sir Archibald Hunter.

Division, whose earlier work foreshadowed his later brilliant services. Kitchener preserved control not only in his own hands but in his head. So far as he gave his confidence to anybody, it was given to Hunter, and to his true and trusty friend, Rundle,[1] the Chief-of-the-Staff. If, however, he imparted to them his ultimate design, he scarcely confided to them his innermost thoughts. Yet as a matter of fact his faith was lodged in his subordinates just as much as in himself. He had chosen his officers and fired them with his own tireless energy, and he knew he could rely on them. He had trained his black soldiers, he had cared for them, and in many ways, and for many years, had done much for them; he believed —as he was always ready to believe of those who served him—that they would do much for him. In a word, he was satisfied that every one knew his work, and he had entire confidence in his workmen. His methods were peculiarly his own. He employed few clerks, dispensed as far as possible with records, and detested writing. He would be seen walking about with a pad of telegraph forms in his hand, and he would wire his own orders or, to the even greater distraction of his Staff, issue them by word of mouth. He was elusive even to his A.D.C.'s, who frequently found to their dismay that he had gone out of camp entirely by himself at night or before dawn. Those who ventured to remonstrate on the score that not only was the Chief risking his own life,[2] but if he were killed his successor would be somewhat embarrassed how to carry on, were met with the laugh-

1 On a sword which he presented to Rundle was inscribed: "To my most loyal and true friend."

2 Four years later Lord Roberts was writing to Kitchener in South Africa to beg him to have a proper escort.

ing assurance, amply justified, that they need not worry—he would see them through.

With Dongola secured, and while the railway was being pushed slowly forward to Kerma—which was only reached in May 1897—the Sirdar repaired to England to discuss, and urge, a further advance. The original order was limited to the occupation of Dongola, but it would obviously be much worse than useless to retain the Egyptian Army at the end of a little military railway, in a hostile region, and with a long and vulnerable line of communications. Further, a French expedition was known to be moving from the Congo, and a ding-dong race to the Upper Nile suggested future international complications. Kitchener's representations resulted in instructions to him to proceed, and to proceed quickly; and further, in the welcome promise of a fair proportion of British troops to join up with the Egyptian force.

He hurried back to Egypt, revolving in his mind his line of advance. It was clear that if an army adequate to the task was to be adequately supplied and brought in due season into contact with the enemy, its progress must be by river as well as by rail. The strategic point was obviously Berber; but was it to be approached by river, or across the desert from Suakin, or down the Atbara from Kassala way? Two other alternatives suggested themselves. Should Kitchener cross the Bayuda desert from Korti to Metemma—Wolseley's pathway in 1884–85—and deal a blow at the rear of the enemy's advanced base; or should he strike out a new line altogether, discard the rails that had just been laid,

and throw a railway across the waterless desert track from Korosko or Halfa to Abu Hamed? Each course had its "pros and cons." All the difficulties and possibilities had to be taken into account, and relative advantages and disadvantages had to be closely weighed. The river was sure, but slow and expensive. The desert route from Suakin was dangerous as well as dilatory; the Expedition would have to be sent round to Suakin, and there were many watering-places in the desert whence raiders could cut the line, while Berber must be seized before the column could approach the river. Similar arguments applied to the Atbara—Kassala and the Bayuda desert routes—with Metemma substituted for Berber in the latter case, and with the advantage that the Expedition was already near to the starting-point, Korti. But the towns could not be taken without a strong force; so strong a force could not advance and be supplied until the railway was built; and the railway could not be built until the towns were taken—truly a vicious circle.

In prospecting the Halfa route the doubtful point was whether Abu Hamed would be held in strength. If not, and if it could be taken by a small force moving either across the desert or up-river from Dongola, a precious position would be secured whither supplies could be brought by railway, and whence there was a clear waterway to the Fifth Cataract. It would then only remain to assault Berber in force.

Kitchener's final decision was as bold as it was considered. He decided to lay the railway across the desert from Halfa to Abu Hamed and make that his main line of advance. This tract of desert was known to be waterless throughout, except at one

point—the bitter Murat wells. It had not been surveyed, a large force of Dervishes might conceivably lurk on the other side to hold us off from Abu Hamed, and several expert engineers shook their heads as to the feasibility of laying the railway line at all. But the Sirdar had balanced the chances carefully, and having made up his mind, steeled it against argument. He would travel by rail from Halfa to Abu Hamed, and on a 3 ft. 6 in. gauge.

A minor but important controversy existed over the gauge; Cromer urged that, for practical and pecuniary reasons, a 3 ft. 3 in. (metre) gauge should be employed. There were already great quantities of metre-gauge sleepers in Egypt, a number of locomotives of that calibre were ready, and more could be quickly and cheaply obtained; but the Sirdar was obdurate just because he was looking ahead. Cecil Rhodes's scheme for the Cape to Cairo railway was then taking shape, and Kitchener was determined to do his share from the northern end. Though the Alexandria—Cairo—Luxor gauge was the normal European one of 4 feet 8½ inches, the Luxor—Assuan line, then being built, was 3 feet 6 inches, and he foresaw the eventual junction of the future Cape—Abu Hamed—Halfa line with the Luxor—Assuan line, which would necessitate the conforming of the Assuan—Alexandria line to the regular South African standard.

The construction was placed in the hands of Lieutenant E. P. Girouard, R.E.,[1] at that time known as a keen and capable young Canadian who had already done three years' practical work on the Canadian Pacific Railway. He had only joined the Egyptian

1 Later Major-General Sir Percy Girouard.

Army in April 1896, but had already been marked out for responsible work; and his record in the Sudan, in Lower Egypt, in South Africa—and later on in Egypt again—more than justified the choice.

On New Year's Day 1897 the work was begun. It was a daring enterprise. "The route selected," wrote a Staff officer, "was waterless, and its course was largely guesswork. A survey about ten miles ahead of construction was all that was possible. The distance from Halfa to Abu Hamed was 230 miles. The problem was whether by any possibility water could be found. Kitchener divided the estimated distance A B into three sections, A C, C D, and D B; he ordered wells to be sunk at C and D and found water in both places. The curious part of the story is that, though looked for in eight other places, water has never been found anywhere else."

The discovery of water—due to "K.'s luck" as it was said—simplified the construction of the line considerably; but unforeseen obstacles multiplied. The desert rose slowly but steadily towards the centre to a height of some 1600 feet above Halfa, and many détours had to be made round unsuspected hills. The track was tricky to lay, and an engineering strike in England interfered with supplies at the most critical time. Yet progress averaged over a mile and a half daily, and on one occasion three miles were laid within working hours.

Kitchener was in his element and revelled in the engineering work. He was constantly up and down the line inspecting, criticising, suggesting, and urging things forward. Once indeed he had to confess himself beaten. There was a block of stores at Assuan. Girouard was sent down to put things

straight. A day or two later Kitchener went down himself to hurry matters on. He found Girouard, dusty and sweating, in a chaos of trucks, locomotives, and stores, and told him to stand by while he himself took a hand. But after four hours' struggle he had to admit the task was beyond even his physical powers, and could only enjoin Girouard to straighten things out to the best of his ability.

Though the massing of material dated from January 1, it was not until May 8, by which time a hundred 1500-gallon tanks had arrived, that the construction itself was put in hand. So smoothly did it proceed that by July 20 120 miles had been laid, when a halt was called for the river-base on the other side of the desert to be made secure.

Meanwhile, although little had been seen of the enemy, there was no lack of courage in his ranks. If the capture of Dongola had caused a panic at Omdurman, the Khalifa was still strong to meet the coming crisis. He had no doubt of the result, for had not the Mahdi seen in a vision the bones of thousands of infidels whitening the plain outside Omdurman? The emirs and sheikhs of outlying provinces, who had for some years been comfortably raiding unarmed people and seizing their supplies, were now ordered to bring in their men to headquarters, as the decisive battle was to be fought close to the capital. The British were moving up-stream by way of Dongola, and to the Dervish mind it seemed a moral certainty that the invader would follow the route of the Gordon Expedition across the Bayuda desert. The remainder of Wad Bishara's Dongola force was therefore told off to hold Metemma with the Jaalin inhabitants, while Osman

Azrak occupied Abu Klea Wells, with outposts at Gakdul. In the north-east only small posts were left along the Atbara and towards Kassala under Osman Digna and others, Abu Hamed being garrisoned with only a few hundred men, and Berber itself weakly held. The Emir Mahmud and his army of the West were ordered to leave Kordofan and Darfur and join the main Dervish force at Omdurman.

As the Egyptian Army did not move beyond Merawi, at the foot of the Fourth Cataract, the Khalifa disbelieved in our intention to advance, and rumours floated down the Nile of an invasion of Dongola province by the Dervishes. Cavalry reconnaissances, however, to Salamat, and through the Bayuda desert towards Gakdul wells, discredited these reports. There was one sharp little encounter at Salamat on June 4, when a body of Dervish horsemen was roughly handled at the cost of Captain Peyton severely wounded and nine men killed. The collision, trivial in itself, was remarkable as the result of an Egyptian subaltern charging without orders—a happy earnest of the new spirit in the Egyptian Army.

The Khalifa next ordered Mahmud to Metemma to quarter his force on the disaffected Jaalin, to whom the prospect of this visitation was so unwelcome that their sheikh hurriedly offered submission to the Sirdar and begged for rifles and ammunition. These were at once sent off, but before they could reach Metemma the Jaalin had been attacked and nearly exterminated by Mahmud.

It was now time to make sure of Abu Hamed. A brigade was secretly concentrated at Merawi under

General Hunter [1]—an imposing force for an attack on an enemy reported only a few hundreds strong. But Abu Hamed was the key to future operations, and Kitchener could not afford to take any risks.

Hunter must needs move rapidly to the assault, but the going was abominable—impossible rocks near the river, and deep sand and no water away from it. Yet the column, fatigued to exhaustion, reached El Kab, thirty-five miles from Abu Hamed, before the Dervishes knew of its advance. When it was only eight miles from the objective Mahmud was reported to be advancing from Berber with reinforcements; but he so dawdled that Hunter was already at Abu Hamed before he had even decided to move.

Hunter, unaware until later of this fortunate delay, pushed on. The column had left Merawi on July 29, and by dawn on August 7 the three black battalions were on the plateau overlooking Abu Hamed from the north and moving down on the Dervish entrenchments. The enemy held their fire until the last moment and then discharged two volleys, mainly at the Xth Sudanese; Kaimakam Sidney and Bimbashi FitzClarence were shot dead, with a dozen of their men; the rest of the Sudanese battalions then bore down exultantly on the village. In less than an hour Abu Hamed was ours.

On the Dervish side 250 out of 400 men were killed, and on ours 21 blacks were killed and 60 wounded.

The news was wired to Kitchener at Merawi, the railway pushed on again, and the gunboats and other steamers ascended the Fourth Cataract. This latter task was formidable, one steamer [2] being capsized

1 Three black battalions (IXth, Xth, XIth Sudanese), with an Egyptian battalion (3rd) for escort duty, guns, and transport.

2 With Beatty on board.

and swept downstream; but by August 29 the last boat of the flotilla had reached Abu Hamed.

Two days earlier Hunter heard that the Dervishes, panic-stricken at the arrival of so many troops and steamers, had cleared out from Berber. Abdel Azim Bey and forty Ababdeh tribesmen were sent out to reconnoitre, and, spreading stories of an immense army on the march, had little difficulty in inducing the stray bands of Dervishes to take flight; and on August 31 the occupation of Berber marked a most important stage of the campaign.

CHAPTER XXVI

The astonishing news of the occupation of Berber by the Friendlies was wired to the Sirdar at Merawi on September 2. The main strategic point of the Sudan, to secure which a special campaign might well have been necessary, had dropped into his mouth like a ripe plum. But could he avail himself of the unexpected gift, and occupy the place in force? The only troops to hand, not 3000 in all, were 130 miles this side of Berber, at Abu Hamed, from which the railway, on which all his calculations had been based, was still 110 miles distant. If he sent a force of any size to hold Berber, how could he supply it? And in any case was it safe to send a few troops there, with Mahmud and 12,000 men only eighty miles off at Metemma, and Osman Digna with another couple of thousand at Adarama—not to mention the ex-garrison of Berber moving within a few miles of the place itself?

The prospect was thrilling and tempting. Fortune had forced his hand, and the question of *morale* decided the issue. On September 5 Hunter, with a flying column of 350 blacks, transported on four gunboats, reached Berber and hoisted the Egyptian flag. By the middle of October the garrison had been increased to portions of three battalions and some

Camel Corps, and a small advanced post had been established at the mouth of the Atbara. The news that the British were in Berber resounded through the Sudan. The Khalifa, now convinced that an attack on his stronghold was imminent—although the railway had not yet reached Abu Hamed—reassembled his armies at Omdurman and forbade Mahmud to advance; two bombardments of Metemma by the flotilla, together with a reconnaissance in force to Adarama, Osman Digna's evacuated headquarters on the Atbara, caused a further chill to run down the Dervish back.

The Suakin side soon became quite tranquil, and the Suakin—Berber road was re-opened to Europeans for the first time since Hicks's ill-fated expedition of 1883.

The railway was steadily pushing its way across the desert, and with every mile facilitating further supply; circumstances seemed to be adapting themselves smoothly to the military programme, and to soldiers on the spot, as well as to those at home who took interest in the campaign, it would seem that everything was proceeding with the precision of oiled clockwork. Already congratulations were showered on the Sirdar, who just then was impelled to tender his resignation to Lord Cromer. The motives for this seemingly strange step, which happily it was easy to arrest, were partly physical and personal, but chiefly financial and administrative.

On October 8 Sir Francis Grenfell arrived in Cairo as G.O.C. of the Army of Occupation. Kitchener had been led to understand that this arrival would mean the supersession of himself in the command of the whole Expedition, when reinforced by British

troops. He had no right, nor reason, to rebel against what would be a perfectly justifiable decision, and he could entertain no resentment against the man to whom he owed so much. He wrote immediately to Grenfell, text and tone alike marking the subordinate officer:

BERBER, *October* 14, 1897.

MY DEAR GENERAL—I should like to know if everything is going on quite to your satisfaction, and if there is anything I can do. Do we keep you sufficiently informed of the position and numbers of the troops?—a short time ago I sent in a general statement which has not been materially altered, except that some of the men of battalions between Merawi and Abu Hamed have emerged with their boats at the latter place. Also about Intelligence, I wire you all important matters, but there is very little, as the enemy remain stationary. I cannot tell if Mahmud will retire or not—I do not think he will advance—the Khalifa is busy fortifying Omdurman; whether he will stand there or not is doubtful, and depends greatly in my opinion on the force we bring against him. If Mahmud retires on Omdurman I think they will disagree among themselves there. But this is conjecture.

There are other matters in which my position is not an easy one; discussions principally of a financial nature, but which involve military considerations, take place between Lord Cromer and myself. How far these ought to be referred to you I do not know. If I were in Cairo things would be clear, but wiring to you to your office on such matters does not appear to me right. I hope you will never imagine that I desire to work off my own bat and not loyally to serve under you, but in some things I do not see my way clearly. If you will place yourself in my position and tell me what you think I should do I will do my best to follow it. I feel the responsibility of my position to all the officers and men under me and should be glad of advice from you.

The present subject of discussion is Kassala. I have stated that, in my opinion, handing over Kassala to the Dervishes renders our position here insecure, and may bring about, either the necessity of sending a British Expedition very rapidly—for which the Authorities would be unprepared—or in our being unable to hold our present positions. I pointed out the strategic importance of Kassala more than eight months ago, and wrote to the War Office also on the subject—I believe it was in my letter to Lord Wolseley. However, nothing was done, and now the question has reached an acute stage, as the Italians apparently insist on evacuating without delay. All my original calculations for taking and holding Berber with the E.A. were based on our flank being secured by Kassala being held, and Lord Cromer and Palmer were both fully aware of this. Of course, the question now is that Palmer will not find the money for the Kassala garrison, which ought to have been raised six months ago. How he can find £200,000 for the railway extension I do not know, but the fact remains he will not find the money for Kassala, though personally I cannot help thinking it could be done. Of course, it might entail some sacrifice in Egypt, such as postponing the building of some barracks, or putting off one of Rogers's valuable projects for sanitation. Instead of this, the army is to be sacrificed. They cannot say I did not tell them; I warned them long ago. Now I am being pressed to find the Kassala garrison out of my present force, which I had calculated on being intact for holding our present positions; and I am asked to choose whether I will do this, or see Kassala occupied by Dervishes. Hunter and I discussed the matter very carefully and we consider, looking at the extended line we have to hold, and the fact that we are now for the first time face to face with the real Dervish force, that however much we both feel the danger of giving up Kassala I should not be justified in detaching and tying up a garrison there out of my present force. I have wired this to Lord Cromer. I cannot now put more than 10,000

rifles into the field, and as you know they are not all equally reliable. I do not know what will be decided, but I should be very grateful if you would let me know whether you think I have acted rightly. There are some possible chances: if we do not go to Kassala, (1) the Dervishes may not occupy it; (2) the Italians would not abandon it. I cannot see how they can do so if the Dervishes are aggressive.

I have other difficulties and worries, but I will not bore you with any more now.

The other "difficulties and worries" were of a minor character and could be overcome. Nor did Kitchener take much heed that during the roasting heat of the summer months, while his troops were resting and recuperating for their coming exertions, the strain on himself had never relaxed. His brain had plotted and calculated every detail for getting troops to the right place and for supplying them there, and all the time he had been battling with the financial authorities at Cairo and at home as to the means for a further advance.

His splendid constitution was a talent with which, perhaps, he was apt to over-trade, but in a letter to Sir Clinton Dawkins [1] there is indication that he recognised its limitations:

ABU HAMED, *October* 6, 1897.

I hope there will be no question about finishing off the whole thing at Omdurman next year. The strain on all of us and on the troops is very great, and if we do not continue the advance the Dervishes will certainly assume the offensive, and then we may have some difficulty to maintain our long line intact, and shall certainly lose a number of valuable lives.

1 Under-Secretary for Finance.

You have no idea what continual anxiety, worry, and strain I have through it all—I do not think I can stand much more, and feel sometimes so completely done up that I can hardly go on and wish I were dead. Before next year's work in the field begins I must get some leave or I shall break down; I have had none for three years now.

Cromer's support was unswerving and invaluable, but even the great administrator could not be responsible for policy directed from home; nor could even he produce the necessary funds when funds were not there, when the British Treasury looked askance at every further request for financial assistance, and when the Commissioners of the Egyptian Debt,[1] hampered by the representatives of other nationalities, declined to advance any more cash for the Expedition.

It had even for a long time been an open question whether the continuance of the railway south of Abu Hamed was practicable. There was just, and only just, enough material to take it to this point; Girouard had thought he would be about five miles short; and though Kitchener accurately calculated a sufficiency, yet he was induced to order a few more miles. But he had only been able to do this by stinting himself as to other much-needed stuff. And while he was daily more and more pinched for money Sir Elwin Palmer, Director-General of Finance, was always prodding him to further economies.

Kassala was the real crux. The Italians, as he warned Grenfell, had found it impossible to occupy the town, so remote from the headquarters of their

[1] The latter had indeed advanced the first half-million in 1896, but the Egyptian Government had been constrained by the hostile Mixed Tribunals to repay it—an apparent impossibility rendered possible by a brilliantly successful appeal by Lord Cromer to the British Treasury.

army. They plainly intimated to our Government that, without giving much further notice, they must evacuate it either to us or to the Dervishes.

His worst enemy could not accuse Kitchener of being fearful of responsibility, but responsible he would not be for the safety of the troops under his command if he had to reduce them by furnishing a Kassala garrison or if Kassala itself were to fall into Dervish hands. He telegraphed to Cromer:

BERBER, *October* 18, 1897.

As regards Kassala, I greatly regret that Palmer's figures appear to me unworkable. Some time ago I telegraphed to you that to obtain budgetary equilibrium for the maintenance of the force in their present advanced positions extra grants would have to be made for supplies and transport. With regard to the former, Palmer has now twice telegraphed to me that I ought to supply what is necessary out of the Budget. I cannot see the obligation or the possibility.

I may put the 18th battalion [1] on the Railway Extension Credit provided I feel certain it can bear the charge. How is it possible for me to be certain when even the survey of the line is not done, and when, to meet my rough estimates of from £200,000 to £300,000, without railway expenses, only £200,000 was granted? If Palmer will point out how the thing can be done I shall be glad to meet him, but I must protest against the manner in which I am being asked to make financial impossibilities possible and called responsible for estimates that cannot be more than approximate.

I do not think that the gravity of the military situation is fully realised. Holding our long line, which is liable to attack at many points, leaves me with a small force at Berber, a place most difficult to defend, and without supports. My suspended design to move the Suakin garrison

1 The latest Reserve battalion, created chiefly for railway work.

here cannot be postponed much longer. The reconnaissance of Mahmud's position proves that we have in front of us a force of Dervishes of better fighting qualities and far greater numerical strength than we have ever met before. In face of this the financial authorities appear to be unable to grant what I think necessary for military efficiency and to carry out the military programme. My estimate of the situation and military requirements may be wrong, but feeling, as I do, my inability to cope with the difficulties and the grave responsibilities of the position in which I find myself, I beg to tender my resignation to your Lordship. I do not take this step without careful consideration, and deeply regret that I should be forced thus to increase your Lordship's difficulties, but I feel that the position in which I am placed leaves me no alternative.

Not for a moment did Cromer entertain the bare idea of Kitchener's resignation. He, and perhaps he alone, appreciated his friend's doubts and difficulties and danger. "I do not think," he wrote a little later, "that the somewhat perilous position in which Sir Herbert Kitchener's Army was unquestionably placed for some time was at all realised by the public in general."

He could picture the Sirdar in his stifling little mud-hut at Berber, lying awake at night, or wrestling solitary during the white-hot hours of day, with columns of figures and calculations of supplies and transport, and labouring all the time to find some way of reconciling the safety and future of his Expedition with the stern demands of Palmer.

Cromer could send but one reply—a summons to Cairo to discuss all that lay heavy on Kitchener's mind. "Kitchener arrived this afternoon," is an entry in Grenfell's diary on November 11. "We

rode to meet him; he looked rather ill, but was very pleasant to us."

The month of respite from incessant toil[1] which was spent in close touch with Cromer and Grenfell sufficed to set matters straight and restore the Sirdar to his high level of health and spirits. He paid a flying visit to Massawa and arranged that the 16th Egyptian battalion at Suakin should, under Colonel[2] Parsons, take over Kassala from the Italians, and the Egyptian flag was hoisted there on Christmas Day.

1 "Cairo, *November* 12. 1897.—I am back here for a few days to settle this taking-over of Kassala and square finance matters for next year. All well at the Front, but we have had precious hard work." (To Mr. Renshaw.)

2 Later Major-General Sir Charles Parsons.

CHAPTER XXVII

Before leaving Cairo on December 13 Kitchener was informed that in the following year an advance was to be made on a larger scale and backed by British troops, and that so far there were no sort of instructions as to his supersession by any British General. He returned to Berber by the desert railway, and heard all the rumours of a Dervish advance in strength; the enemy had apparently satisfied himself that the "Turks" were not going to attack Omdurman on a falling Nile, and that the small garrison of barely 2000 men at Berber offered a tempting bait for its recapture.

As the information was genuine, the Sirdar issued orders at once for the concentration of the Egyptian forces at Berber, and telegraphed to Cairo for the assistance of a British brigade of which three battalions were standing ready. The answer was doubly gratifying. The brigade should start forthwith, and the Sirdar would have full responsibility [1] for the command, supplies, and transport of *all* troops south of Assuan. He would receive his orders from Lord Cromer, and expenses would be met from Imperial funds and adjusted later. By the end of January, thanks to the invaluable desert railway, which carried nearly all the Egyptian infantry

1 Lord Salisbury's determination was perhaps the deciding factor in this matter. He intimated to his colleagues in the Cabinet that if any other than Kitchener were to command the Expedition to Khartum they would have to change their Prime Minister.

from Dongola and the British from Halfa, the concentration was complete, and the combined force was posted along the Nile between the mouth of the Atbara and Dakhesh. The latter place, the temporary railhead, was garrisoned by the British brigade as then made up [1] under Major-General Gatacre.

But, much to the astonishment of all, the enemy did not materialise. The emirs at Omdurman were at loggerheads with one another, and so distracting were their dissensions that the large force gathered at Kerreri—just outside the town—melted away.

Mahmud, however, who with 15,000 men was at Metemma, was not to be put off, and in the middle of February he was said to be crossing the Nile with immediate intent to take Berber for himself. The news sounded almost too good to be true: the very movement which, had it been carried out a few months earlier by the Khalifa's entire force, might have seriously damaged our scattered troops, was now going to be launched in slender strength against our reinforced and concentrated army. It looked as though Providence were delivering the enemy into our hands. Kitchener promptly closed up the troops and moved to Kunur, a village just north of the Atbara mouth, covered by the river and the strong entrenched lines of "Atbara Fort."

Yet it was not till March 19 that Mahmud and his Army—perhaps 20,000 in all, inclusive of women and children—left the Nile at Aliab and moved across country towards the Atbara. His original intention, perhaps prompted by Osman Digna, was to move on Hudi to outflank our left and, after quickly mop-

1 First battalions Warwicks, Lincolns, and Cameron Highlanders: the Seaforth Highlanders joined later.

ping up our posts on the Nile, to descend on Berber from the land side. But he counted without his host, for by the time he left the Nile we were already at Hudi. Mahmud therefore had to keep further up-stream, and he struck the river—or rather the succession of pools in a dry bed which represented the Atbara at that time of year—at Nakheila, some twenty-two miles above Hudi. He had thus compromised himself, for he had put himself too far from the Nile to make it possible to reach Berber except by long marches across a waterless desert.

Kitchener at once moved to Ras el Hudi, ten miles nearer to his enemy, and pushed his cavalry forward to reconnoitre. Divided counsels had, however, again interfered with the Dervish *élan;* for Mahmud was showing signs of nervousness and, instead of attacking, made a strong zariba round his camp.

For a whole fortnight, in the grilling sun, the armies sat and watched each other. Every day there were cavalry reconnaissances and little encounters in which the Dervishes, whose pangs of hunger constantly increased, showed their usual ferocity and recklessness of their own lives. Our flotilla was sent up-stream to threaten Shendy, opposite Metemma, where Mahmud had left many of his women. A few troops landed there and took into gentle custody a number of these ladies—with the result that large parties of black followers deserted Mahmud in order to learn what had befallen their beloved.

Kitchener himself was just now said to be momentarily visited by the demon of indecision, although it is by no means certain whether he was really unable to judge between Gatacre, who urged an immediate

onslaught on Mahmud, and Hunter, who advocated a further wait; or whether, as he had British troops under his command, he thought that Grenfell should be consulted—if only indirectly through Cromer; or whether again there lurked the idea that, with a question of policy involved, he should, before engaging his force, secure a mandate from the representative of the British Government.

On April 1 he telegraphed to ask Cromer what his views were. Wolseley, on learning that he had done even this, wrote:

> You should not have asked such a question. You must know best. Men and Governments at a distance are prone to panic and weak measures, and are not to be trusted—no, not the best of them.

Cromer was perhaps both a little flattered and a little dismayed at being consulted on military tactics; he conferred with Grenfell, and sent a guarded answer recommending caution and trust in Hunter's opinion. But before the answer was received, Hunter himself, fearing lest the enemy should dribble starving away, withdrew any opposition to an immediate offensive.

On April 4 Kitchener moved in five miles nearer the enemy. The following day Hunter with seven squadrons of cavalry took a further and final survey of the Dervish *dem* (camp), sharply punishing the Bagara; and on the 6th the Army closed up to Umdabia, less than seven miles from the zariba as the crow flies. The attack was to take place at dawn on the 8th. Kitchener had at first objected to the day as being a Friday, but dismissed his objection when reminded that it was Good Friday and

therefore a fitting occasion for an act of liberation.

On the evening of the 7th the bivouac at Mutrus was formed in mass of brigade squares, Gatacre in front, then MacDonald, Maxwell, and Lewis in the order named, the guns inside the squares; the cavalry were left at Umdabia with orders to join up during the night. At 1 A.M. on the 8th an advance was made under a full moon, and when the Dervish fires were sighted, and the wheel tracks made by Hunter's last reconnaissance hit off, direction was changed, agreeably to orders to move straight on the *dem* from the desert side.

At 3.30 an hour's halt took place, when line of battle was formed and the advance continued. The line was about 1500 yards long, the British on the left, with the Warwicks in column on the extreme left, the Lincolns next on their right, then the Seaforths and then the Camerons, each of the last three with six companies in first line and two close behind in support. The Egyptian brigades, all of six-company battalions, had four companies in line, two in support; a battalion in reserve in the centre brigade, and one in column on the right in the right brigade. MacDonald was next to the British on their right, and Maxwell on the right again. Lewis's brigade was kept in square in rear of the British right, and the cavalry was brought up on our extreme left.

This formation had been constantly rehearsed, as the Sirdar had decided thus to meet an attack should the enemy leave the *dem*. As the day dawned the Dervish horsemen were seen careering about in front, and in a little time the *dem* came in view, its parapets crowded with men. The line was halted

at 6 A.M. within 600 yards of the zariba, and the artillery paced about thirty yards forward and opened fire. The whole line stood with ordered arms to watch the bombardment which followed, the Sirdar and his staff posting themselves on the left of the guns. Gatacre's orders were that the Camerons should double forward, pull away the zariba, and make gaps for the three other battalions which were to deploy, the Seaforths outwards and the Lincolns to the right, the Warwicks guarding the left, while the Camerons re-formed in column as a reserve. The Camerons, with fine scorn, rushed the zariba, appearing to brush it aside, and dashed on, only two companies re-forming. A mix-up with their comrades of the Lincolns and Warwicks took place, but no harm ensued and the whole line pressed ahead.

The black brigades, as steady as they were brave, fired as fast as they could load, and used their bayonets delightedly. The Sirdar remained in front of Lewis's brigade, of which one battalion kept the high ground while two others protected, ready to support, the British left. Broadwood, with the cavalry, was on high ground to the left of the line. The Dervish horsemen faced him and made as if to charge, but scuttled into the bush when the maxims opened fire. They then went for the Warwicks as easier game, but these coolly formed up and drove them away, thereafter co-operating with the British maxims in breaking up an enemy swarm which, flag in hand, had come out from the southern face of the *dem* to attack the British on their left flank. With an hour's hard hand-to-hand fighting our attacking line forced their way to the river, but it was many hours later before the exultant cavalry could be switched

off pursuit through the palm-groves and thick thorn-bush. Mahmud's army was *mafish*. Mahmud himself was a prisoner, 3000 of his followers lay dead, and over 4000 were wounded or prisoners. Our own casualties were 510, of whom 114 were in the British brigade.

The one drop of bitter in Kitchener's cup that day was that our wounded suffered a good deal from want of shade, and some of them from insufficient medical aid and appliances; and it was noted that during the Burial Service of the British officers his cheeks were wet with tears. "Kitchener was very human for at least a quarter of an hour," wrote an English officer. And after the battle, as he rode along the cheering ranks of his men, white and black, his eyes were lit up, he was beaming with joy—even exclaiming with delight at the victory achieved. So when Mahmud was led into his presence, and in reply to the question why he had brought death and destruction into his country, answered sullenly, "I have to do my duty the same as you," the Sirdar only smiled and remarked that it was rather a good answer.

The Army went into summer quarters along the Nile, between Berber and the Atbara; but while the troops were enjoying a well-deserved rest, there was still no rest for the Sirdar. Consent had by this time been definitely obtained from the Home Government that the advance was to continue at high Nile and that more British troops should be sent. On him devolved every arrangement, and in the midst of his calculations and correspondence there came uncomfortable news from Abyssinia, which might have checked the Expedition or necessi-

tated its increase. For it appeared that Menelik, in spite of the friendly treaty which had been concluded with him by the British Mission at Addis Abbaba just a year before, had succumbed to intrigues and was most affably communicating with the Khalifa. An Abyssinian force moving towards Roseires had reached the Beni Shangul country, and Abyssinian messengers had arrived at Omdurman with a French flag and an ingenuous request that the Khalifa should carry it in the forefront of the battle! The request was refused; but further friendly letters passed, in which Menelik was urged to have nothing to do with either French or English, but to send them back whence they came. It seemed, therefore, that trouble might gather round Kassala, and it had to be considered whether Gedaref—towards the Abyssinian border—should be occupied if evacuated by the Dervishes and threatened by the Abyssinians. The matter quietly subsided, but as meanwhile rumours had reached Omdurman that the French had arrived in the Bahr el Ghazal, it behoved the British to act at once.

Kitchener's programme, drawn up early in May, gave August 20 as the date of his advance; he then stated that he would require another brigade of four British battalions, besides a regiment of cavalry, two batteries, maxims, and other details—somewhat peremptorily intimating that this programme did not admit of alteration. The authorities at the War Office debated, but did not demur, and in a letter of June 1 agreed to every item, and volunteered an extra battalion—to proceed to Egypt when the advance should begin:

. . . . And further, Lord Lansdowne is advised that it

would be desirable to place a Divisional General in command of the whole British Force. It is, however, understood that on account of expense, and because it is not thought advisable to send out an officer who might be senior to Sir Herbert Kitchener, Lord Cromer would prefer to avoid appointing a Lieutenant-General with the usual Divisional Staff. He therefore proposes that Major-General Gatacre should command the Division, with a Brigadier to command each of the brigades.

All this was balm to Kitchener, who, on July 2, returned to the front from a visit to Cairo, and spent the remaining seven weeks before the final advance dashing backwards and forwards between Halfa and the Atbara, and even up to the Shabluka Cataract, putting the finishing touches to his plans.

Meanwhile it was becoming more and more certain that the Khalifa intended to fight at Omdurman and nowhere else. Our patrols and gunboats had been busy during the summer, but had come across no trails of the enemy, even up to the Sixth Cataract; and everything tended to show that Abdullah was gathering himself up for a stand outside his capital. By the beginning of July he had 20,000 combatants, of whom 4000 were mounted; and before we drew up to him he could boast of nearly twice as many more. His white opponent, however, had implicit confidence in the power of the modern rifle; and neither the modern rifle, nor the man behind it, was to let him down.

On August 18, and again on the 28th, rumours arrived of the occupation of Fashoda by the French. It was high time to ring up the curtain on the last scene.

CHAPTER XXVIII

On August 27 the army of 8200 British and 17,600 Egyptian soldiers[1] was concentrated on the left bank of the river at Royan at the head of the Sixth Cataract. In the forward move of over 120 miles

1 This was the *Ordre de Bataille*:

British Division: Major-General Gatacre.
1st Brigade: Brig.-Gen. Wauchope.
1/ Warwicks; 1/ Lincolns; 1/ Cameron Highlanders; 1/ Seaforth Highlanders.
2nd Brigade: Brig.-Gen. Hon. N. Lyttelton.
1/ Grenadier Guards; 1/ Northumberland Fusiliers; 2/ Lancashire Fusiliers; 2/ Rifle Brigade.
Egyptian Division: Major-General Sir A. Hunter.
1st Brigade: Col. MacDonald.
2nd Egyptians; IXth, Xth, and XIth Sudanese.
2nd Brigade: Col. Maxwell.
8th Egyptians; XIIth, XIIIth, and XIVth Sudanese.
3rd Brigade: Col. Lewis.
3rd, 4th, 7th, and 15th Egyptians.
4th Brigade: Col. Collinson.
1st, half-5th, 17th, and 18th Egyptians.
Mounted Forces:
21st Lancers (Col. Martin); Camel Corps (8 companies, Major Tudway); Egyptian Cavalry (9 squadrons, Col. Broadwood).
Artillery: Colonel Long (batteries of 6 guns each).
Brit. 32nd battery R.F.A.; 2 40-pounder guns; 37th battery R.F.A. (5-inch Howitzers).
Egyptian. Horse battery (Krupp); 4 field batteries (18-pounder Maxim-Nordenfeldt).
Machine-guns:
2 British detachments (6 and 4 guns).
2 Maxims to each of the 5 Egyptian batteries.
R.E. detachment.
Flotilla: Commander Keppel, R.N.
4 old gunboats (each carrying 1 12-pounder gun and 2 Maxims).
3 1896 class gunboats (each carrying 1 Q.F. 12-pounder, 2 6-pounders and 4 Maxims).
3 1898 class gunboats (each carrying 2 Nordenfeldts, 1 Q.F. 12-pounder, 1 Howitzer, and 4 Maxims).
5 transport steamers.

no opposition was offered and scarcely a shot was fired.

The Khalifa was mustering his forces outside Omdurman and making ready for the great massacre of the infidels so pleasantly and confidently predicted by the Mahdi. All the emirs had been summoned for the glorious fight; all combatants had joined up, and within and without the city wall were piled up huge stores of dates and grain, spears, flags, and material of war. Fifty thousand armed savages were licking their lips at the coming slaughter and, with fanatic faith in the holy cause of Islam, awaited the assault of the infidels. Had not the Mahdi himself foretold the victory of the faithful? What could the war-engines of the white men avail against the power of Allah? Why, only last week the Mahdi had appeared to the Khalifa in a dream and positively promised that the invading masses should be destroyed to the last man. There was no room for doubt—it was enough that Allah and the Prophet were on the side of the True Believers.

Meanwhile, however, no celestial aid had sharpened the Believers' strategical wits; by a very false move—due probably to their overwhelming desire to slay the infidel on Kerreri plains and nowhere else—the head of the Shabluka river gorge had been evacuated, and the five guns commanding that narrow pass had been removed. This retirement was a great boon to us, for to take even in rear so defensible a position would have been costly in men and boats.

Indeed, as our army, preceded by a network of cavalry and camelry patrols, advanced along the west bank, with a crowd of Major Stuart Wortley's [1]

[1] Afterwards Major-General the Hon. E. Stuart Wortley.

Friendlies keeping pace with them on the eastern shore, doubts arose as to whether there would be any fight at all, and for three days scarcely a Dervish was sighted.[1] Stories began to fly about that the Khalifa, after bluffing as long as he dared, had precipitately retreated with all his troops to the south.

But early on September 1 the cavalry—after topping the ridge of Kerreri hills which lay some four miles to the north of Omdurman—while moving on to the northern slopes of Jebel Surgham, were greeted with a sight which pleased them infinitely more than the view of the huge and straggling town itself, with the Mahdi's tomb rising yellow and pointed above the mass of mud-huts, and the ruins of Khartum Palace in the dim distance. For in the plain to the west of Omdurman lay a long dark line dotted with flags and horsemen; and as our cavalry went forward to reconnoitre, congratulating themselves that at least there would be one zariba to attack, the line arose and revealed itself as a solid mass of foemen. Here was the Khalifa's main army, drawn up in seven ponderous divisions, with the Khalifa himself and a large reserve bringing up the rear. This was about eleven o'clock; and shortly afterwards the Sirdar himself rode up Jebel Surgham to take a look at them. He estimated the total at over 35,000; as a matter of fact it was nearer 50,000. The gunboats were now abreast of Omdurman, and our heavier guns, with fine contempt for the fire from the Dervish forts, which mounted something like forty or fifty pieces, bombarded forts and town for over an hour with lyddite shell, which had all the

1 The only "Dervish" prisoner captured during this time turned out to be an emissary of our own Intelligence Department!

advantage of novelty. The Howitzer battery landed on the eastern bank and lent a hand in knocking the forts into dust, breaking down portions of the great wall, and blowing away huge pieces of the Mahdi's tomb. On the eastern bank opposite the town, and on Tuti Island, the Friendlies were busily engaged in reducing the villages and forts, and if there was a little faltering on the part of some of the Irregulars, the Jaalin reserve, bent on reprisals, went straight for the houses and slew nearly all the occupants.

By one o'clock our main body had reached the hamlet of Egeiga on the Nile and was constructing a zariba. The order was given to stand to arms and prepare for the charge of the Dervishes, who were then some four miles off. "We want nothing better," said the Sirdar quietly; "we have an excellent field of fire, and they may as well come to-day as to-morrow."

But the enemy thought otherwise, for in the early afternoon, on reaching the Khor Shambat, a depression which ran at right angles to the Nile about three miles away from our zariba, the mass halted abruptly, fired a barbaric *feu de joie,* and lay down for the rest of the day.

As the evening wore on, there were many surmises as to the Dervish plans. Would they attack during the night? Or would they be rash enough to wait till morning and come on in broad daylight? Although our army was sleeping under arms behind the thornbush and ready to come to grips at any moment, a savage onrush in overwhelming numbers and in the middle of the night was not to be contemplated with entire complacency. The full moon and searchlights from the gunboats, the latter of which through-

out the night mystified and much discomposed the Dervish host, would give ample notice of attack. But moonlight shooting, however steady, could not be so deadly as in the daytime, and if once the enemy masses should pierce the zariba and stampede the transport animals, the superiority of the modern fire-arm would be quickly discounted.

To forestall a night assault the Sirdar must persuade the Dervishes of his own intention to hurl himself on them. He therefore sent a number of the inhabitants of Egeiga—most of whom were, of course, friends of the enemy—to reconnoitre the Dervish position for him, giving them the impression that he was planning to attack that night. The emissaries naturally imparted the news to their acquaintances, and the intelligence, together with the usual chatter of conflicting opinions between Dervish emirs, had the desired restraining effect.

CHAPTER XXIX

The night passed silently, and before dawn our mounted troops were out to reconnoitre; they were not long kept in doubt. The divisions of the enemy moved as soon as it was light and advanced on the zariba, with the evident intention of surrounding it and crushing it by force of numbers. Osman Azrak led some 8000 men, spread out in a thick crescent, straight across the plain on to our position, whilst a solid body of about 6000 passed round the southern flank of Jebel Surgham and, joining up with Osman's right, attacked the left flank of our zariba. Another large body under Osman Sheikh-ed-Din, numbering perhaps 15,000, made for the Kerreri hills in order to get at our right flank, and Ali Wad Helu, with 5000 more, moved round the north-western slopes of Kerreri with intent to descend on to the river beyond our right flank and cut off any chance of retreat to the north. The Khalifa, with his brother Yakub, his Black Flag, and a powerful reserve of some 17,000 of his best troops, posted himself behind Jebel Surgham so as to complete the work of destruction which Osman Azrak was about to commence.

Our own force meanwhile stood calmly in its semi-circular position, covering the hamlet of Egeiga, and awaited the attack. The Sirdar, disdaining the

THE BATTLEFIELD OF OMDURMAN

REPRODUCED, WITH PENCIL MARKS BY LORD KITCHENER SHEWING POSITIONS OF THE ENEMY, ETC., FROM THE ACTUAL MAP USED BY HIM DURING THE BATTLE. N.B. EGEIGA IS TERMED EL GEMUAIA ON THE MAP.

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shelter of deep entrenchments or fortified houses, and trusting entirely to the efficacy of modern rifle fire, had extended the whole of his infantry—except Collinson's Egyptian brigade, which remained in reserve—in a long double-ranked irregular horse-shoe, with only a couple of companies per battalion in support. The length of the line measured 3000 yards, and in gaps between the units were placed the little field-guns and maxims at irregular intervals, the main gun strength being towards the left flank. On the left was Lyttelton's brigade—with its flank almost on the river—and Wauchope's, Maxwell's (Sudanese), MacDonald's (Sudanese), and Lewis's (Egyptian) in succession. The 21st Lancers had by this time been withdrawn on to the river-bank just behind Lyttelton, and the Egyptian mounted troops (nine squadrons of Cavalry, a Horse battery, and the Camel Corps) were outside, lightly holding the tops of the Kerreri hills, with their animals in the hollow between the two main ridges. Their orders were to check any advance against the Egyptian brigade on the right, it being inadvisable that the latter should bear the full brunt of a serious attack.

At a little after six o'clock the first of the Dervish formations came under artillery fire, the Grenadiers soon afterwards opening at the long range of 2700 yards. Other battalions gradually took up the firing, and Osman Azrak's followers staggered and sank under a hail of bullets and shells. But there was little faltering and no turning back. Where a hundred fell, a hundred more jostled each other to take their places; with fine courage and fierce curses the surging mob headed straight for the lines of death-dealing rifles, and, reckless of losses, did not

draw breath till they were within 300 yards of the Sudanese brigades. There and then, however, they faded away. Masses, torn to pieces by the terrible fire, became groups; groups became driblets; driblets became single men who ran, flung up their arms, and dropped. In forty minutes from the opening of the assault over 2000, including Osman himself, were killed, and twice that number of his brave barbarians were wounded. The remainder concealed themselves as best they could in the folds of the ground and fired fitfully on.

Meanwhile Broadwood and his Egyptian mounted brigade were having a fine time. Skirmishing about the Kerreri hills, they suddenly found themselves up against Osman Sheikh-ed-Din, whose 15,000 followers included a large proportion of rifles. The Sirdar saw their peril and flashed a message bidding them to return to the zariba, but Broadwood replied that he hoped he might draw the enemy off to the north, and proceeded to do so. His Camel Corps, trotting over the broken rocky ground, was soon in difficulties, and lost a number of men from the fire of the Dervishes, who crowded over the hills and bore down on them as they were heading back for the zariba; two guns also had to be left in a bad bit of marshy ground. Broadwood was about to launch a cavalry charge to rescue his camelmen, when a large gunboat appeared close by the bank and opened a withering fire on the Dervishes, who halted, broke, and drew back behind the hill. The cavalry, much relieved by the escape of the camelry, trotted enticingly away to the north, followed by swarms of the infuriated enemy, who were only persuaded to desist from the chase by the fire of a second gunboat

which came up within effective range. Driven back behind the Kerreri hills, they tried to re-form and to carry out their original task of attacking our right flank. But it was too late; the first assault had failed, and Broadwood had scored brilliantly.

Having disposed of Osman Azrak, the Sirdar perceived that, if he would avoid a dangerous house-to-house fight in Omdurman, the Anglo-Egyptian force must get there whilst the Dervishes were still out in the desert. An advance in the open involved some risk to our right flank from the groups of armed and unbeaten enemies still in the field, but the Sirdar believed that this risk would be largely discounted by the relative shortness of the road to be traversed and by the hammering the enemy had already received, and his bold course proved to be the safe course. The 21st Lancers were therefore ordered to reconnoitre, and to drive off any Dervishes cumbering the road between the zariba and Omdurman. The rest of the army was set in motion in échelon of brigades, left in front.

In pushing forward down the eastern slopes of Jebel Surgham, the advanced patrols of the Lancers reported a party of Arabs about 1000 strong in a *khor* running north and south nearly a mile to the south-west; and, unaware of the Khalifa's powerful reserve force below the western slopes of Jebel Surgham, Colonel Martin thought to sweep away the men in the *khor* by a regimental charge. Eager both for a cavalry fight and to make a name for the regiment,[1] the Lancers swung into line and galloped across an interval of a few hundred yards. Hacking

1 The 21st Lancers had only joined the British service (from the E.I.C.) in 1862, and had not seen service since a detachment acted as guard to Napoleon at St. Helena.

their way through the crowds of angry Hadendoa, the Lancers succeeded in gaining the opposite slope of the *khor,* and prepared to re-form and charge back. But in two minutes they had lost 70 men and 120 horses, and they could only hurry round the right flank and, by opening fire with their carbines, drive the Dervishes back to the Khalifa and his reserve.

By the time the Lancers had re-formed, the first British troops had reached the lower eastern slopes of Jebel Surgham; when, suddenly, heavy firing was heard from MacDonald's, the rearmost, brigade in the plain on our right flank, which was being attacked by the bulk of the Khalifa's Black Flag reserve.

Learning from Hunter that MacDonald might require a helping hand, Kitchener turned round the nearest British brigade—under Wauchope—for that purpose, and sent Collinson's brigade, which was in reserve and acting as escort to the transport, in support on his right; he also ordered Lyttelton, Maxwell, and Lewis to change front to the right and attack Jebel Surgham and the Khalifa's right flank. The Sirdar issued his own orders to the British brigades, and sent gallopers direct to the others; he did not even hesitate to save precious moments by giving directions to the Brigadiers, and even to Battalion Commanders, over the heads of the Divisional Commanders. His short circuiting was justified, for Wauchope's leading battalion, the Lincolns, only just reached MacDonald's blacks in time. The Sudanese brigade, hard pressed by the attack of the Khalifa's reserve from the south-west, were formed at first with all four battalions in line facing in that direction. The three other brigades, however, had now

stormed Jebel Surgham, and they brought a devastating fire to bear from the heights on the Black Flag and the Khalifa's right flank, taking much of the pressure off MacDonald.

Just as the Khalifa's attack slackened, what looked like an entirely new Dervish army suddenly appeared from Kerreri hills. These proved to be about 15,000 of the followers of Osman Sheikh-ed-Din and Ali Wad Helu, who flung themselves on MacDonald's right and rear flanks. The doughty Scotsman rapidly formed his right battalion (IXth) to the right, and moved his left battalion (XIth) to prolong their line to the right. He then advanced his Egyptian (2nd) battalion to prolong his new left, and broke off companies, guns, and maxims from his old left, and sent them at full speed across to lengthen the right flank, thus completely changing front from facing S.W. to facing N.W., against the new attack. On the parade-ground this movement would have been highly complicated; for excitable black troops to carry it out under a heavy fire was little short of marvellous, and Brigadier and Brigade must have learnt their work, and have known one another, very thoroughly.

It was, however, one thing for MacDonald to place his Sudanese with their face in the right direction, and quite another to make their fire effective; eager to be at the enemy with the bayonet, they loosed off nearly all their cartridges as fast as they could, and by the time the Arabs had come within 300 yards their pouches were nearly empty. At this moment, however, the Lincolns doubled up, and deploying hastily on their right so damaged the enemy with oblique fire that the Dervishes, unable to get

to closer quarters, thought it time to cut their immense losses and make for the desert.

The day was ours. Advancing westwards in a long line, firing as they went, our troops drove the enemy like sheep in front of them, breaking up any groups that tried to re-form, and scattering Arabs in every direction. At 11.30 the Sirdar re-formed the brigades and moved directly on Omdurman, whilst the cavalry harried the retreating Dervishes and hunted them away from the city.

In the early afternoon the leading infantry brigades halted, and, joined later by the cavalry, watered and fed at the Khor Shambat during the heat of the day. At 2.30 the advance was resumed, and with the Sirdar riding at their head and Maxwell's Black brigade leading, the force moved on towards the maze of filthy huts which formed the northern quarter of the town. Here the Sirdar left three battalions and two guns, "to guard the approaches," as he explained, and, escorted only by a single battalion (XIIIth) and four guns, and with a gunboat keeping pace with him, he pushed on towards the centre of the city. The Great Wall played no part, for the last Dervishes in authority, on hearing the Sirdar's proclamation of quarter to those who surrendered, hastened to give up the keys of the city, and thousands of Arabs flocked from all quarters to receive the "Peace-pardon." Pushing on, with the Black Flag of the Khalifa unfurled behind him, the Sirdar and his Staff arrived opposite the Mahdi's tomb; and there his career was nearly cut short. Two of our own guns, which had been left behind on the Wall, through some misunderstanding opened fire on the tomb, and four shells

burst within a few yards of the Headquarters Staff. The guns were quickly quieted; the Headquarters camp was pitched close by, the force bivouacking on the outskirts of the town. Any fighting Dervishes were cleared out during the night, and the crackle of rifles which went on was chiefly due to inter-tribal fighting amongst the Arabs themselves and the paying off of old scores.

The Khalifa, after a vain attempt to rally his disciples to the defence of the city, had taken advantage of his long start of the tired Egyptian cavalry, and had vanished to the south. He picked up large parties on the road, and eventually made Kordofan, where he joined the garrison at El Obeid.

Dervish corpses to the number of 10,563 were counted on the field and elsewhere during the next few days; at least as many more were wounded, and about 5000 prisoners remained in our hands; of these a large number were blacks, who were forthwith enrolled in our own Sudanese battalions. On our side 3 British officers had been killed and 17 wounded; whilst of other ranks only 25 British and 20 natives had been killed,[1] and 136 British and 261 natives wounded—a casualty roll of under 2 per cent.

Before ten o'clock that night the Sirdar, having drafted his telegram announcing the victory, left his Staff to fill in the details and despatch it, stretched himself on a native *angarib*,[2] and forthwith went to sleep. Through all the crucial events of the day his sang-froid had never left him; he had been as

1 Of the British killed 20 men belonged to the 21st Lancers.

2 Wooden bedstead with tight-stretched interwoven strips of leather serving as a mattress.

cool and collected as though the fighting of a big battle was an everyday experience. His calmness in directing the intricate manœuvres which finally drove the Khalifa off the field was of a piece with his seemingly stony composure as he rode at the head of his troops through the captured city. Stern, upright, and unsmiling he passed through the crowded streets of the town which for years had been the goal of all his efforts; and even at the evening meal with his personal Staff the set features displayed no unusual feelings, and hardly a word betrayed the intense inward glow which the day's doings must have induced.

On the morrow the army was cleared out of the foul capital of the Dervish dominion, and the British force was ordered down-stream. But before a man was embarked, the finale of the campaign was to be marked by an impressive ceremony. On September 4 detachments from each regiment were ferried across to Khartum; and there, on the ruin of Gordon's Palace, the British and Egyptian flags were hoisted together, and a solemn memorial service was held for the hero who some thirteen years before had given himself for the cause of civilisation.

And here at last pent-up feelings found expression; for when Father Brindle,[1] the veteran and beloved chaplain who had accompanied the Gordon Relief Expedition, offered the prayer he had composed for the occasion, the tears welled up in Kitchener's eyes and coursed unrestrained down his cheeks; and when the simple ceremony was over, and his officers waited for his word to dismiss the parade, he was too overcome to speak, and merely signed to General

[1] Later Bishop of Nottingham.

Hunter to give the necessary word of command. A crowning touch was given to the ceremony by the receipt of a telegram brought over in haste by a boat. Her Majesty the Queen was pleased to express her deep appreciation of the victory by conferring on the Sirdar a peerage as a reward for his brilliant services.

"Ouf! it is all over," wrote Kitchener a few days afterwards to a friend, "and I feel like a rag—but very, very thankful there was no hitch. The Queen offered me a peerage in such a nice manner. I think 'Khartoum of Aspall' will be the title I choose. 'Kitchener' is too horrible a name to put a 'Lord' in front of."

Felicitations rained thickly down. Statesmen and soldiers vied with one another in their enthusiasm to telegraph their applause and goodwill, and the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Delcassé, finely discarding any shadow of the resentment which a representative of his nation might justly feel, offered his congratulations on the success of the British arms at Khartum. Nothing, however, came more pleasantly to Kitchener than Grenfell's summing-up:

> Arrangements for the transport of the forces to the vicinity of the battlefield were made by the Sirdar and his Staff with consummate ability. All difficulties were foreseen and provided for, and from the start of the campaign till its close at Omdurman operations have been conducted with a precision and completeness which have been beyond all praise—while the skill shown in the advance was equalled by the ability with which the Army was commanded in the field. . . . Never were greater results achieved at such a trifling cost.

CHAPTER XXX

A MONTH before the battle of Omdurman Lord Salisbury presciently laid down the line of action to be taken when the Expedition should reach Khartum, and his instructions could be—and were—observed to the letter. Both British and Egyptian flags were to be hoisted. Though it was not necessary at present to define the political status of the Sudan, Her Majesty's Government considered that, in view of the financial help accorded by her to Egypt, England could claim a predominant voice in all matters connected with the Sudan. The Sirdar was authorised to send flotillas up the Blue and White Niles, and was to proceed in person to Fashoda, taking a small body of British troops with him; but the flotilla on the Blue Nile should not go beyond Roseires. No title of France or Abyssinia to any portion of the Nile Valley was to be acknowledged, and all collision with the Abyssinians was to be avoided. The Sirdar should convince any French Commander that his presence in the Nile Valley was an infringement of British and Egyptian rights. He might send a small force up the White Nile beyond the junction of the Sobat. The King of the Belgians had no right to any portion of the Nile Valley except under the Lado lease.

Scraps of information drifted in to the Intelligence Department, and on September 7 definite news was to hand that 8 white officers and 80 foreign black soldiers were at Fashoda, and that they had driven off the steamers sent by the Khalifa to attack them. Accordingly the Sirdar, with 100 Cameron Highlanders, two battalions of Sudanese, and a battery of artillery, proceeded up-stream on the 10th, and brushing aside a foolhardy and rather feeble attack on his flotilla at Renkh, was within a few miles of Fashoda on the 18th. He wrote at once to the "Chief of the European Expedition," informing him of his victory at Omdurman, his action at Renkh, and his approaching arrival at Fashoda. The answer was brought next morning by a Senegalese sergeant in a steel rowing-boat: Major Marchand, Commandant of the Infanterie de Marine, congratulated the Sirdar on his victory,[1] and announced that by order of his Government he had occupied the Bahr-el-Ghazal up to Fashoda, where he had arrived on July 10.

The flotilla at once moved up to Fashoda and moored opposite the old Government buildings of the town; and shortly afterwards Major Marchand and Captain Germain were received on board the *Dal* by the Sirdar and his Staff. After introductions, Kitchener heartily complimented Marchand and his companions on their long and arduous

1 "J'ai appris avec le plus vif plaisir l'occupation d'Omdurman par l'armée anglo-égyptienne, la destruction des bandes du Kalifat, et la disparition définitive du Mahdisme dans la vallée du Nil. Je serai sans doute le premier à présenter mes bien sincères félicitations françaises au Général Kitchener, dont le nom incarne depuis tant d'années la lutte de la civilisation aujourd'hui victorieuse contre le fanatisme sauvage des partisans du Mahdi; permettez-moi donc, mon Général, de vous les présenter respectueusement, pour vous d'abord, et la vaillante armée que vous commandez."

journey, but informed them civilly that the presence of the French at Fashoda and in the valley of the Nile was regarded as a direct violation of the rights of Egypt and Great Britain, and that he must protest in most emphatic terms against their occupation of Fashoda and their hoisting of the French flag in the Khedive's dominions.

To this Marchand replied that he was there by order of his Government, without whose instructions he could not retire. Kitchener then quietly intimated that he intended to hoist the Egyptian flag; he trusted that no opposition would be offered, as his force was overwhelmingly superior, and he suggested that he should place a gunboat at the disposal of the French to assist their retirement. Marchand responded that he and his troops must of course bow to the inevitable and, if required, would die at their posts; but he must ask that the question of his retiring should be referred to his Government, as without orders he could not haul down his flag and accept the Sirdar's kind invitation. Throughout the interview Marchand behaved with quiet dignity and soldierly bearing, although he knew that he was short of stores and ammunition, and that if he were left in sole possession the Dervishes would make but short work of him and his little band. The Sirdar and his officers were the pink of politeness, no word of threat was uttered, and the rival claimants to Fashoda took leave of one another with cordial expressions of mutual respect.

During the afternoon all the troops were disembarked, and the Egyptian flag was hoisted with due ceremony to the salute of twenty-one guns, a garrison being left on shore consisting of the XIth

Sudanese and four guns under Major Jackson. The position for the flag was fixed by Wingate and Captain Germain. To avoid any appearance of high-handedness, a ruined bastion was selected on the old Fashoda fortifications, about 500 yards from the French flag, but on the only road leading into the interior.

Next morning the Sirdar, leaving Jackson in a sound strategical position—from which he commanded the road to the interior and guarded the river approaches from the south—proceeded to the mouth of the Sobat river with the remainder of the troops, and there established a post of the XIIIth Sudanese with two guns. No Abyssinians were seen, although a mixed party, consisting of a Frenchman, a Russian, a Swiss, and a number of Abyssinians had arrived there on June 10, and waited two or three days in the vain hope of meeting Marchand's expedition. The Sirdar gave orders that gunboat patrols should proceed south up the Bahr-el-Ghazal, and after completing the arrangements for maintaining the stations steamed back north with the remaining gunboats.

Kitchener had carried out his instructions fully and tactfully.[1] It would have been well if his self-

1 "Inform the Sirdar that his words and action meet with the warm approval of Her Majesty's Government." (From Lord Salisbury. A similar message was sent from the Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs.)

Marchand himself wrote:

"FASHODA. MON GÉNÉRAL—*Le Caïbar* vient d'arriver ici, et j'ai eu l'agréable surprise de recevoir avec votre très gracieuse lettre le splendide souvenir du Sirdar aux officiers français en retour des maigres légumes du petit jardin de Fashoda auxquelles vous avez daigné faire l'honneur de paraître sur votre table. Ceci est une réponse de Général à Capitaine, et c'est à ce titre que je l'accepte en me faisant l'interprète des remercîments des officiers de la Mission française qui ont porté hier soir, au dîner, la santé du GÉNÉRAL-EN-CHEF LORD KARTOUM que je ne pourrai jamais oublier avoir reçu à Fashoda, ce qui était un grand honneur pour

restraint and consideration for French susceptibilities had been imitated by a portion of the British Press, whose comments and cartoons tended to make bad blood; and by certain members of Parliament, whose acrimonious utterances did much to exacerbate Gallic feeling. The two Governments laboured conscientiously to prevent an open rupture, and after lengthy *pourparlers* the French with admirable grace yielded their claim to the "desolate and unknown swamp in Central Africa."

A fortnight was spent at Omdurman, and Kitchener was able to make out his bill for the campaign—certainly a most moderate charge. As a matter of fact the total expenditure from March 12, 1896, to February 26, 1899, was less than half a day's cost for Great Britain in the Great War.

	Military. £E.	Railways. £E.	Telegraphs. £E.	Gunboats. £E.	Total. £E.
Dongola Campaign	469,622	181,851	8,299	65,869	725,641
Subsequent Operations	526,601	699,521	13,526	89,065	1,328,713
Extension Atbara to Khartum	..	300,000	..	..	300,000
Total	996,223	1,181,372	21,825	154,934	2,354,354

In English currency—£2,413,213.

For this modest sum, and with the loss of about 60 British and 160 Egyptian lives, the Dervish power had been shattered, the Sudan re-occupied, nearly a million square miles brought under Anglo-Egyptian rule, and about 700 miles of permanent railway constructed.

moi.—Veuillez agréer, mon Général, les assurances profondement respectueuses de ma considération la plus distinguée.—MARCHAND."

[Official Stamp: "Afrique Centrale Française—Mission du Congo-Nil."]

CHAPTER XXXI

From Omdurman the Sirdar went down to Cairo, and thence proceeded home—a home-coming anticipated in England with feverish eagerness. Hospitality ran riot in advance; every important house in London was said to have been tendered as his lodging, and the more imaginative journalists suggested that rooms were being prepared for him in the Sovereign's palace itself. The answer which Kitchener gave to the offers which reached him was that he preferred the house of an old friend.

The Sirdar landed at Dover on October 27 under military honours; Sir William Butler, commanding the troops, prophetically suggested that when the Customs Officials searched his luggage they would surely discover a Field-Marshal's bâton.

The enthusiasm of the Dover townsfolk warmed him into a speech of unusual length and eloquence. Diverting credit from himself to his splendid troops, British and Egyptian, he declared it was by virtue of their arduous and dangerous labours that the reconquest of the Sudan had been achieved, that the barriers had been broken which for fourteen years had blocked the way to civilisation on the Nile, and that the field was at last cleared for commercial enterprise.

Kitchener spoke on this occasion with unusual fervour; he was striking the keynote of his message to England. He was about to inaugurate another, though a peaceful, campaign. He needed, and would secure, British help to bestow on the people of the Sudan, not only civilisation after conquest, but such a measure of education as would open up a new reign of prosperity and peace.

His reception at Charing Cross was even inconveniently rapturous, and the next few weeks brought an avalanche of honours and congratulations, of banquets and receptions. He was admitted to the freedom of the City at Fishmongers' Hall, and presented with a Sword of Honour at the Mansion House. His fellow East Anglians held high festival for him; the Royal Artillery and his own Corps, the Royal Engineers, claimed him as their guest, and at Chatham, under the shadow of Gordon's statue, he counselled the Gordon boys to choose soldiering, and "hoped many of them would come under his command."

Cambridge conferred on him an honorary degree; he was hailed as *Gordonis ultor, Aegypti vindex,* and complimented as a man of business no less than a man of war—*miles at mercator idem.* The new Doctor of Laws made a rousing appeal to the "soldierly spirit and enthusiastic patriotism" of the undergraduates, urging them to "hold the Old Country together in the coming years," and adding somewhat colloquially that he "only wished he had had some of them with him in the Sudan."[1]

1 The Public Orator, Dr. Sandys, in presenting Kitchener for his degree, said he had fulfilled the oracle of Zeus Ammon, recorded by Herodotus, which foretold that "Egypt should be the whole country watered by the Nile." Allusion was made to the fact that a hundred years ago the Battle

He had already been gazetted "Baron Kitchener of Khartoum in Africa and of Aspall in the County of Suffolk" when Queen Victoria received him as a visitor, first at Balmoral, then at Windsor; Edinburgh gave him its freedom, and he was acclaimed wherever he appeared in Scotland, and a little later in Wales.

These earnests of his fellow-countrymen's esteem secured his gratitude, but did not subdue his natural disinclination for ceremonial functions, especially those at which he was expected to deliver a speech. But during these few weeks he submitted himself to live in a blaze of publicity and plaudits; he even exploited his popularity in the direction of hard cash, if only he might make good the purpose nearest his heart—the permanent benefit of the brave blacks whose guardianship he had taken over as a legacy from Gordon.[1]

As his brief holiday drew to a close he spread broadcast through the Press his definite appeal—to which all his speeches in public had been intended to lead up—on behalf of a college at Khartum in honour of Gordon's memory and in fulfilment of Gordon's aspirations for the welfare of the Sudan. The three millions of Sudanese, Kitchener reminded his countrymen, were at present wholly without education, but some kind of education, at some time

of Aboukir Bay was won by Nelson—another Horatio and East Anglian—whose names composed the anagram, *Honor est a Nilo*. A little later, when Oxford conferred its degree on Kitchener, a wag in the gallery of the Sheldonian inquired whether the Khartum College Eight was Head of the River.

1 Had Kitchener's life been spared three years longer he would have seen a deputation of Sudanese sheikhs offering their felicitations in London to King George V. on the British victory in the Great War, and Sayed Abderrahman Mohammed Ahmed, son of the Mahdi, offering his father's "lucky" sword in token of loyalty—to be returned to him by the King in recognition of his fidelity.

or other, they were bound to have. His hope was to make Khartum the centre of a sound education provided by British money and organised from Great Britain on British lines—to secure for England the first place in Africa as a civilising power. He had found in the Sudanese a great capacity and readiness to learn, and he proposed to begin with the sons of leading men, heads of villages and districts. At first the instruction should be purely elementary—in reading, writing, geography, and English. A more advanced course would later include technical training specially adapted to the dwellers in the valleys of the Upper Nile. There was to be no interference under this scheme with the religion of the people.

To found and maintain the College he asked for £100,000, a tenth of that sum sufficing for the initial outlay, and the interest on £90,000 providing for the maintenance of the institution. The instruction would in the first instance be free, but it was fully intended eventually to charge moderate fees. He finally commended his call for help as "made on behalf of a race dependent on our mercy, in the name of Gordon, and in the cause of that civilisation which is the life of the Empire of Britain."

The appeal was publicly endorsed by the Prime Minister and the veteran philanthropist, Baroness Burdett-Coutts; a Fund was opened in its support by the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House on December 1, Lord Rosebery exhorting the Sirdar's compatriots to "send him back happy." The Queen became Patron of "the Sirdar's Fund," which had the support of the Prince of Wales and of numerous leading men in the country, Kitchener himself taking the post of President.

The public conscience no less than the popular imagination was touched. The whole country responded with a will. It liked the man and loved the memory he invoked, and it approved both the matter and the manner of the appeal. Rich and poor subscribed quickly and freely; the City of London was so keenly responsive that the Stock Exchange even paid the Sirdar the unprecedented compliment of inviting him to address its members in the House,[1] where he had a rousing reception and was promised a large purse. A week later he started on his return journey, already the recipient of £80,000, and confident of having the balance within a short time.

1 On that day a large party was invited to meet the Sirdar at luncheon at New Court, the business-house of Messrs. Rothschild. Kitchener called on two other eminent bankers in the morning, and obtained from each a promise that he would subscribe the same amount as Rothschilds. He then playfully told Lord Rothschild that he might be unable to remain to luncheon unless a specially generous contribution to the College were named. With characteristic open-handedness the great financier gladly responded to the hint, and was as gratified as Kitchener himself that the donation would be trebled.

CHAPTER XXXII

On the 19th January 1899 the Anglo-Sudanese agreement was signed by Lord Cromer and the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the supreme military and civil command was vested in Kitchener as Governor-General of the Sudan, whose proclamations were to have the force of law.

Lord Cromer himself went to Omdurman and addressed the sheikhs on the future government of the Sudan. The Egyptian and British flags floating together was the emblem of partnership, but England was to be the predominant factor. To the new Governor his Chief gave some valuable hints:

I want to add something privately to the official and semi-official instructions which I am sending you. I am—as I feel sure you are aware—anxious that your civil should be as successful as your military administration. I have been at this sort of work for some forty years, and know something about it. I think, therefore, you will not mind my speaking frankly to you.

In the first place, pray encourage your subordinates to speak up and to tell you when they do not agree with you. They are all far too much inclined to be frightened of you.

In the second place, the main thing in civil and political life is to get a sense of *proportion* into one's head, and not to bother too much about insisting on every particular view as regards non-essentials.

I commend these principles to you. Whatever success I have attained in life is largely due to strict adherence to them. I learnt them from my two old chiefs, Sir Henry Storks and Lord Northbrook, who taught me most of all I know.

In the third place, *pray* keep me informed and consult me fully. A secretive system will not work so well in civil as in military matters. The latter are far less complex and in some respects less difficult than the former. Remember that previous consultation and full information do not necessarily involve centralisation: indeed, the very reverse is the case. Excuse me for stating my views so frankly.

A fortnight later Cromer wrote:

I am sending you officially the Sudan agreement, as also a general letter of instructions. The latter is couched in very wide terms. It is impossible to enter into great detail. Generally what I want is to control the big questions, but to leave all the detail and execution to be managed locally.

In the word "big" I of course include all such measures, for instance, as involve any serious interference with the water-supply [1] of the Nile, or any large concession to Europeans or others.

Neither homily was taken amiss; both men worked as smoothly together as heretofore, and Kitchener's début as an administrator owed much to the wise direction of a great Proconsul. Much was also due to his own insistence on seeing and minutely investigating things for himself, and on his ready accessibility. He visited as many districts as possible,

1 It was just now that Sir William Garstin, Kitchener's close friend, proceeded up the White Nile as far as the Bahr-el-Ghazal, and wrote an exhaustive report as to the flood capacity and volume of water in the different rivers, information which was to prove of infinite value in constructing the dams and reservoirs of Egypt and in apportioning the water for cultivation.

gave audiences, heard complaints, set going local authorities, rewarded fidelity with honours, and everywhere used his own eyes and ears to learn and assimilate the conditions of the country and study the temper of the people.

His Memorandum to the Mudirs, which might have borne the label of "Magna Carta Sudanensis," was a liberal, comprehensive, and precise document, and compliance with its terms was easy. Embedded in it was an injunction which perhaps presented veracity in a new light:

> The people should be taught that the truth is always expected and will be equally well received whether pleasant or the reverse. By listening to out-spoken opinions, when respectfully expressed, and checking liars and flatterers, we may hope in time to effect some improvement in this respect in the country.

The subjects which called for and received the Governor-General's attention were multifarious. They ranged from the telegraph, land ordinances, general cultivation, the grain supply for starving districts, royalties, and the liquor laws, to the building of an hotel and the restoration of the Palace at Khartum; from pensions, indemnities, and the bearing of arms, to the appointment of an Anglican bishop; from questions of frontiers and customs with Erythraea, the French, the Congo, and Abyssinia, to questions regarding the flag and rights of Egypt as compared with those of England; from superintending a flotilla of steamers on the head-waters of the Nile, to planning the new city of Khartum, in which he devised a system of radiating streets which met with expert approval.[1]

1 Kitchener, in recognition of the merits of his planning of the new

As at Suakin, so at Omdurman, Kitchener had to dispel charges of cruelty and callousness levelled against him at home by so-called humanitarians. The main allegations referred to the killing of Dervish wounded after the battle, and to the destruction of the Mahdi's tomb and disposal of his bones.

It seemed to him unthinkable that he should have to reply to cruel, and to his mind disgraceful, accusations, brought as much against his troops as himself; but he issued officially a considered and categorical denial to the statements—

(1) That the troops under his command, whether British, Egyptian, or Sudanese, wantonly killed wounded or unarmed Dervishes when no longer in a position to do them injury.[1]

(2) That Omdurman was looted for three days after its occupation.

(3) That when the troops were rapidly advancing upon the town, fire was opened by the gunboats on mixed masses of fugitives in the streets.

The grisly topic of the Mahdi's remains was also clarified:

After the Battle of Omdurman [Kitchener wrote to Lord Salisbury] I thought it was politically advisable, considering the state of the country, that the Mahdi's tomb, which was the centre of pilgrimage and fanatical feeling, should be destroyed; the tomb was also in a dangerous condition owing to the damage done to it by shell-fire, and might have caused loss of life if left as it was. When I left Omdurman for Fashoda, I ordered its destruction. This was done

Khartum, was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

1 Rundle (then commanding at Dover) wrote to the *Times* that as Chief of the Staff he had "never heard Lord Kitchener by implication or otherwise countenance the killing of Dervishes. Over and over again I have heard him deprecate such a course."

in my absence, the Mahdi's bones being thrown into the Nile. The skull only was preserved[1] and handed over to me for disposal. No other bones were kept, and there was no coffin. I was advised after the taking of Omdurman, by Mohammedan officers, that it would be better to have the body removed, as otherwise many of the more ignorant people of Kordofan would consider that the sanctity with which they surrounded the Mahdi prevented us from doing so. . . . I feel sure that no Mohammedans in this country feel anything but satisfaction at the destruction of his power together with all trace of his religion.

The victory at Omdurman had destroyed the Dervish power, but it needed more than one expedition to clear the country of lingering hostile bands.

Colonel Parsons, with a column of 1350 men all told, set out from Kassala directly he heard of the downfall of the Khalifa, crossed the swollen Atbara on September 16—by boats he had constructed himself—and arrived before Gedaref on the 22nd. He found himself in face of a greatly superior force of Dervishes, but his admirable tactics, and the steady courage of his 16th Reservist Egyptian Battalion, were too much for Nur Angara—the leader of the great attack at Abu Klea in 1885—who gave up the town and himself with it.

Six days later Ahmed Fedil arrived with 8000 men at Gedaref to renew the attack, but was roughly handled; and with the arrival of reinforcements from Omdurman on October 22 the danger, which had been acute, was over.

Meanwhile Hunter was deputed to proceed up the

1 "The skull of the Mahdi," wrote Lord Cromer, "was buried at Wady Halfa."

Blue Nile to Roseires, and garrisons of varying strength were posted by him at different points on the river to deal with any trouble that might conceivably arise.

Ahmed Fedil now remained to be reckoned with. Colonel Lewis was, at the end of October, sent up the Blue Nile with a mixed force, and after many weeks of hide-and-seek succeeded on December 26 in locating the enemy entrenched on an island at Dakhila, some 20 miles south of Roseires. Though Ahmed Fedil's force was much stronger than was expected, Lewis forded the river and gallantly attacked. A brilliant little action ensued, our Sudanese advanced across the open, and with splendid dash carried the enemy's position and drove them into the river. Some 500 Dervishes were killed and over 2000 were made prisoners. Ahmed Fedil bolted to the White Nile, where most of his force surrendered at Renkh, and their commander fled with a handful of followers to rejoin the Khalifa in Kordofan near Shekan, the scene of Hicks's disaster in 1883.

On January 10, 1899, Colonel Walter Kitchener, brother of the Sirdar, was sent up-stream, with 2000 men and 1600 camels, to capture the Khalifa if he could. He disembarked at Dueim, and after one false start pushed on 125 miles across a waterless desert to within 3 miles of the Khalifa's camp. Here, however, a reconnaissance revealed the unpleasant fact that some 6000 Devishes were guarding their chief; and after a short deliberation Colonel Kitchener wisely declined to attack and withdrew to the Nile. This little expedition was euphemistically termed the "Shirkela reconnaissance," and some

heated controversy occurred as to whether it could not have been made more effective; but the military authorities at home, as in Egypt, endorsed the commander's discretion.

The Sudan had been conquered, but the seal was still to be set on its freedom. During the summer reports came in that the Khalifa Abdullah with a daily diminishing following was flitting from place to place; and at the end of August Wingate's agents located him in Southern Kordofan near Jebel Gedir, within 100 miles of the Nile. A force of nearly 8000 men was hastily despatched up-stream and, based on Kaka, moved inland on Fungor. But in mid-October, the Khalifa, getting wind of this move, promptly shifted northwards, announcing his intention to attack Omdurman! The bluff was too thin, and the starving suite continued to desert him. His search for supplies brought him at last near the river, and the Sirdar instantly despatched a flying column of 3700 men under Sir Reginald Wingate to head him off and destroy him.

A Commander-in-Chief might have been expected to administer himself this *coup de grâce,* but Kitchener had foreseen the likelihood of being called to other spheres of labour and—Hunter having gone to India—he was more than anxious that Wingate should be his successor. As Director of Intelligence the latter had been of inestimable value, but he had so far commanded no troops in the field, and as a test the Sirdar, with all confidence, entrusted to him the final expedition.

Landing at Fachi Shoya,[1] Wingate on November 22 got in touch with Ahmed Fedil, attacked him,

[1] 180 miles up-stream from Omdurman.

THE SUDAN
to illustrate
the military operations
1883-1899.
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Important Actions ⚔
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RED SEA
ERITREA
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Kassala
Gondar
Adua
Massawa
Keren
Tokar
Ras Kasar
Berber
Abu Hamed
Metemma
Shendi
Omdurman
Khartoum
Halfaya
Sennar
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Shabluka
Gos Rejeb
El Fasher
Rufaa
Abu Harax
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Gallabat
Debra Sin
Tsana
Addis Ababa
Blue Nile
White Nile
Atbara
Kokreb
Sinkat
Tokar
Agordat
Adarama
Berber
Famaka
Dakhila
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Ras Kasar
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Kunur
Hudi
Nakheila
Shabluka
Royan
Tomaniat
Halfaya
Khartoum
Omdurman
Rufaa
Meralamia
Abu Harax
Wad Médani
Sennar
Karkoj
Roseires
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Dakhila
Renkh
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Um Debreikat
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Abba I.
Kaka
Fashoda
Sobat
Bahr el Ghazal
L. No
J. Gedir
Dar Nuba
Blue Nile
White Nile
Atbara
Rahad
Gallabat
Debra Sin
Montik P
Gondar
Tsana
Addis Ababa
Gedaref
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Old Dongola
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Tokar
Ras Kasar
El Obeid

killed 400 men, and captured all the grain he was taking to the Khalifa; he then made two fine night marches, and finally surprised the ex-tyrant at Um Debreikat early on the morning of the 24th. After repelling a fierce onrush in the semi-darkness our troops drove the enemy back on to their camp, and killed large numbers of them, including the redoubtable and detestable Khalifa Abdullah himself and his chief captains. Ali Wad Helu, Ahmed Fedil, and many other important emirs, on seeing the day lost, had calmly seated themselves on their sheepskins to await the stroke of death; 3000 prisoners, besides 6000 women and children, were taken, and the Dervish losses in killed were estimated at not less than 600.

Wingate had displayed dash and judgment, courage and prudence; a reverse at the hands of a numerically superior enemy and in an almost waterless desert would have spelt annihilation to the force; but he unhesitatingly staked his all on a throw, and the result entirely justified him. He had shown his worth in the field no less than in the office, and the Sirdar could be assured that Egypt would be satisfied to recognise in him the Sirdar-elect. The succession and Kitchener's translation to a very different and distant part of Africa were nearer than even he believed.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Great Britain entered in November 1899 upon the South African War with a very slender notion of the difficulties before her. By the majority of Englishmen it was regarded as an opportunity for settling quickly and finally a long and vexatious quarrel in which we had hitherto reaped little honour, and the chief topic of conversation on board outgoing troopships was whether Cape Town would be reached before the campaign was over.

The early checks which our forces suffered—even the investment of Sir George White in Ladysmith—hardly disturbed public equanimity at home, unlimited confidence being justly accorded to Sir Redvers Buller and what was in those days accounted his large army. Every one told his neighbour that, when Buller arrived, the campaign would be short, sharp, and decisive. Kitchener did not hold this comfortable belief; it is on record that he warned an eager soldier, apprehensive lest his arrival in South Africa should be belated, that the war would be long and laborious, and fraught with more grief than glory.

The complacency of the country was rudely shaken by the events of the second week of December—the "Black Week." The reverses of Stormberg, Magersfontein, and Colenso following in quick succession

necessitated heavy reinforcements, and it was also obvious even to the uninitiated that a change in the chief command was likely to be made. As to this latter point the Cabinet was decided by Buller's telegram on the evening of the battle of Colenso, in which he expressed the opinion that he was not strong enough to relieve White, and that he should let Ladysmith go.

To Lord Roberts, then commanding in Ireland, the Cabinet no less than the country instinctively turned. The Premier, Lord Salisbury, who was absent from London when a hurriedly convened conference was held on the military situation between Lord Lansdowne, Mr. Balfour, and Mr. Chamberlain, telegraphed his approval of the supreme command being offered to the veteran Field-Marshal, but made the express stipulation that Kitchener should accompany him as Chief of the Staff.

The combination was admirable and proved wholly workable, although the precise relations between the two, as officially defined, were not in practice rigidly maintained. It will be remembered that in 1899 there was in England no Staff organisation designed for the conduct of war, the work of the Staff being regulated purely by the exigencies of peace administration; and it had been the practice, on the outbreak of one of our little wars, for an Expeditionary Force to be organised for the occasion in brigades or divisions from battalions and regiments which had not been trained collectively; and for each Commander-in-Chief to select his own Staff. There was therefore no established practice of Staff work in the field, and the idiosyncrasies of each Commander-in-Chief dictated the general method of command. In

India Roberts had been in the habit of preparing and issuing his orders with the help of a few carefully selected personal assistants, and had not availed himself of a Chief of the Staff as such an officer would be employed to-day.

Kitchener was not, or certainly was not used as, Chief of the Headquarters Staff in the more recent sense of the title. His normal rôle was less that of translating the Commander-in-Chief's views and wishes into orders than of acting as legate *a latere,* despatched from Headquarters with authority to represent the supreme command at any point or in any contingency. Thus we repeatedly find the titular Chief of the Staff in actual command—a position altogether outside the functions of a Staff Officer as later prescribed.

Kitchener was at Khartum when on December 18 he received his orders—which were not wholly unexpected. Making a record trip by river and rail to Cairo, he embarked at Alexandria on the cruiser *Isis* for Malta, where he trans-shipped to the *Dido,* and on December 27 joined Lord Roberts on the *Dunottar Castle* at Gibraltar. Their conversations on the voyage as to future strategy were the more anxious because between Madeira and Cape Town no news of the war was to hand. An outstanding subject was how to make the British troops sufficiently mobile to tackle an enemy who lived in the saddle. Buller's experience in the field with Irregular Horse had impressed him as to their courage, but left him very sceptical as to their discipline. Hence, though good riders and men accustomed to horses would have been procurable in large numbers, he had not cared to invite them to form a military force, but had rather urged

the advantages of infantry. As the supply of Regular Cavalry was very small, the whole mounted force in South Africa was a mere handful, and its large and rapid augmentation was of immediate importance. Mobility, moreover, postulates not only men who can move quickly, but the means of supplying them on the move; the matter of transport was therefore as momentous a theme for consultation as that of recruiting mounted men. Nor was the question of artillery less urgent, the opening phases of the campaign having disclosed the startling fact that the Boer guns, if few in number, were superior in range and power to our own. Both Roberts and Kitchener were fully alive to the troubles in store for them, and the latter wrote bluntly during the voyage to an intimate friend:

MADEIRA, *December* 28, 1899.

I hope we shall manage it all right out at the Cape, but it is a big business badly begun, and the difficulty of unravelling the tangled mess will be very great. No transport seems to have been organised, and all the troops are mixed up. Our Artillery has turned out useless, as I expected. When you think, all our field guns were originally 12-pr.; they were then bored out to make them 15-pr., which naturally only allows of their being fired with reduced charges! We are hopelessly behind the age, owing to our Artillery Officers' dislike of anything new. I wired from Cairo what guns we ought to have, but of course the official reply was against doing anything. My God! I can scarcely credit their taking the fearful responsibility of sending us into the field practically unarmed with artillery. Roberts, I am glad to say, is wiring again.

Cape Town was reached on January 10, 1900, and the general position was then found to be that Mafe-

king under Colonel Baden-Powell,[1] and Kimberley under Colonel Kekewich, were still holding out; General French, after pushing the Boers out of Arundel and Rensberg, was occupying a strong position in front of Colesberg; Ladysmith had just come through a determined attack, and Buller was about to make another attempt at relief; Lord Methuen was entrenched near the Modder River; and, contrary to expectation, rebellion had not yet burst forth in Cape Colony.

[1] Later Lieut.-General Sir R. Baden-Powell.

CHAPTER XXXIV

The considerations underlying Lord Roberts's plan were explained by him to the Commission on the South African War:

> Before leaving England I had practically determined that the advance must be through the Orange Free State, but by one line, not by three lines through Cape Colony, as originally intended; and the Western line commended itself to me for the following reasons: (1) It was on that line only that we had possession of a railway-bridge over the Orange River. (2) It was by that line only that Kimberley could be relieved in time; had Kimberley fallen, Mafeking must have fallen also. (3) It was by that line only that I could deal with the Boer forces in detail, and defeat Cronje before he could be reinforced.

The original conception had been to strike along the Orange River to Springfontein Junction, and so turn the flank of the Boers opposing French at Colesberg and open the road to Bloemfontein. This was the move which Kitchener favoured; but, by the time Roberts arrived in South Africa, much political wire-pulling had been employed to secure an early relief of Kimberley. Cecil Rhodes, presuming on his influence and position in South Africa, clamoured for immediate rescue, even intimating that the surrender of the town was imminent, when in point of fact it

was in no urgent danger. It is always arguable whether an advance on Springfontein would have secured the same success as the march to Bloemfontein by the Modder. The former would undoubtedly have been the easier route, and this probably influenced Kitchener, whose ears were less sensitive than those of his Chief to Rhodes's vehement appeals. The final decision was to relieve the Diamond City and engage Cronje, before moving on the capital of the Free State.

The Chief of the Staff addressed himself to the details of this plan, especially to the increase of the mounted troops and the improvement of the transport. A Colonial Mounted Division was quickly organised by the expansion of existing units already raised in the Cape Colony; and two new regiments (Roberts's and Kitchener's Horse) were formed in Cape Town. Some Colonial infantry who were able to ride were provided with steeds and turned into Mounted Infantry, and eight additional battalions of Regular Mounted Infantry were obtained by drawing from each infantry battalion one company composed of men who had some knowledge of horses. These men, however, were under many disadvantages. They were but half-trained, they only saw their newly-imported horses just before the advance began, their saddlery had to be scraped together from any quarter, and many of them for whom no breeches could be found were badly chafed from having to ride in their drill trousers—a nether garment which very quickly becomes the worse for wear.

Kitchener in a private letter was caustic on negligences and ignorances:

We are getting along a little bit, but we have not a single

saddle for love or money; all our water-bottles are so small as to be useless. It was exactly the same in the Sudan, when I had to fit out the whole of the British troops with water-bottles which they had to pay for. Not a single emergency ration, so the men have to fight all day on empty stomachs. I could go on, but what is the use? I am afraid I rather disgust the old red-tape heads of departments. They are very polite, and after a bit present me with a volume of their printed regulations generally dated about 1870 and intended for Aldershot manœuvres, and are quite hurt when I do not agree to follow their printed rot. (To Mr. Ralli, 30.1.00.)

A fortnight earlier he had written:

Things don't look very bright out here. I fear the W.O. does not yet realise the importance of the war; petty jealousies and refusals to give what we want are the order of the day; *e.g.* Roberts applies for a list of officers from Egypt carefully selected by me. Cromer agrees, but W.O. has refused. The same with guns. We will do our best to pull through, but evidently without help from W.O. Utter disorganisation—or rather no original organisation suitable for the country—is the order of the day. If we had worked the Sudan campaign like this we should never have reached Dongola—most of us would be in prison at Omdurman or dead by now! Lord Roberts is splendid.

Calculations for transport laid bare a like deficiency in material and animals, and revealed an even deeper difficulty, as in this case it was not a question of adding to formations in being, but of recasting an entire system. Local transport had to be adapted to military exigencies. A particular build of vehicle, drawn by either mules or oxen, was required to overcome the difficulties of the rough tracks across the veldt which in South Africa are termed "roads." Hitherto the lighter form of transport which moved

with, or close behind, the fighting troops was mule-drawn; while for the heavier supply columns, which trailed some way behind, ox-wagons were used. It was of the essence of Roberts's plans that the troops should be able to march and live apart and away from the railways; many days' supplies for the whole force had to be moved at one time, and the transport had to keep up with the troops. This entailed a much larger increase in animals and vehicles than—under the system then in vogue—could be obtained before the date fixed for the start. Oxen not only move slowly, but, to be in good condition, must graze at intervals; so their day's trek is strictly limited. The mule transport was ready to hand and could keep up with the infantry columns; but there was not nearly enough of it for the requirements of the Army. Buller had, in fact, assured Roberts that no rapid advance could be made anywhere in South Africa except by railway, and to the railway Roberts declined to be tied.

Adhesion to the railroad had been one of the chief causes of our early ill-success, for the Boers could always anticipate our precise line of plodding advance, and their mobility allowed them to accept or refuse battle at will. Cronje, sitting at Magersfontein, was quite aware of this fact, and told any nervous burghers who suggested that his flanks might be turned that "the English do not make turning movements; they never leave the railway, because they cannot march."

A prime problem, therefore, was how to enable the Army to leave the railway. Under the existing order, a great part of the mule transport was allotted permanently to units as regimental transport, an

arrangement which had a double advantage; it was generally familiar to the Army, and the regimental officers, being directly interested in the efficiency of the transport, were correspondingly careful of it. Its cardinal fault was its extravagance: a battalion weakened by losses in action or sickness was allotted the same transport as a battalion at full strength, while a battalion detained on garrison duty uselessly retained its transport.

Kitchener proposed to replace decentralisation by concentration; he took away all mule transport, except first echelon, from the regiments, pooled it, and issued it only to those units which needed it, and only in proportion to their actual strength. This distribution was, of course, open to many objections, and ran the gauntlet of much grumbling. It was admittedly an improvisation to meet special conditions, and, like most improvisations, fell short of perfection. But, whatever its defects, there was just this to be said for it—that without it Roberts could not have marched to Bloemfontein.

By the new expedient, and by the exercise of rigid economy in other directions—even to paring down the number of ambulances sent with the force—sufficient mule transport was collected to render the Army mobile. Risks had still to be taken, as even Kitchener's expedients could not make up the full tale of mules. The slow-moving ox convoys had therefore to follow the Army more closely than was contemplated by regulation, and one of these fell an important prize to De Wet at an early stage of the advance. Kitchener had carefully weighed all difficulties and knew that he had to take some chances; having made up his mind, he allowed neither pre-

cedent nor routine to stand in his way, and found his justification in that the Army for the first time was free to leave the railway-line. By February 8 these arrangements had been completed,[1] the reinforcements from England had arrived, and the Commander-in-Chief with Kitchener repaired to Methuen's command at Modder River. The remainder of the forces destined for the relief of Kimberley and the march to Bloemfontein were encamped along the railway close behind. This concentration had been carried out with the utmost secrecy. The departure of Roberts and Kitchener was not made known, and they boarded their train at a small siding some way out from Cape Town, quarters and horses being prepared for them at different places as a blind. Roberts confided his plans only to a select few of his Staff who had to carry out the necessary arrangements, and to French, whose cavalry was relieved on the Colesberg front by a force of infantry and Colonial horse, and brought round at the last moment to the Modder. The enemy was hoodwinked by documents which were allowed to fall into his hands, and by active preparation for the continuance of the advance along the railway, Methuen making a feint westwards, which took Cronje's attention off the decisive flank.

1 The advance from the Modder had been fixed for February 21, but after the depressing news of Spion Kop the Government pressed Roberts to antedate his move and put a fresh complexion on affairs. The Commander-in-Chief asked his Chief of the Staff if the transport could be made ready ten days sooner than had been arranged. A rapid but close calculation enabled Kitchener to tell his Chief that the start could be made on the 11th, but on the distinct understanding that the first move should only be on Kimberley. He asked that a considerable halt should be made there so that the Transport could be reorganised; thus the Army, "filled up" with supplies, would be able to march not only to but through Bloemfontein northwards. Roberts agreed to this arrangement at the time, but was ultimately unable to adhere to it.

CHAPTER XXXV

On the day after his arrival the Commander-in-Chief received two cheerless messages: Buller reported his failure at Vaal Krantz, despondently adding that the fate of Ladysmith was only a matter of days; and a communication from Rhodes renewed the suggestion that Kimberley was at the last gasp. Roberts thought that to relieve Kimberley would in effect relieve Ladysmith, and in the early morning of February 11 sent French with the Cavalry to work round Cronje's left flank. The orders for this movement were written by Lord Roberts in personal letters to his Divisional Commanders; he then directed his Chief of the Staff to accompany and superintend the turning movement, and Kitchener joined the Sixth Division under General Kelly-Kenny,[1] which was following hard after the Cavalry.

French, on reaching the Modder at Klip Drift on the 14th, was in contact with Cronje's outposts, and had to draw rein till Kelly-Kenny could get up. The Infantry by putting in a double march reached Klip Drift at 1 A.M. on the 15th, and early the same day French made his famous "Ride" through a gap in the Boer lines, Kitchener watching him from a small kopje on the bank of the Modder. Before dark

1 Later General Sir Thomas Kelly-Kenny.

the Cavalry were in Kimberley with less than fifty casualties.

This effectually alarmed Cronje, who, unperceived, had moved during the night of the 15/16th up the Modder in the direction of Bloemfontein. Early on the 16th, Kitchener at his post on the kopje sighted a long trail of dust to the north-east. With one of his characteristic flashes of intuition, he was the first to grasp that Cronje was escaping from Magersfontein. He seized a map from an officer standing by, and after making a few measurements dictated an order to French, directing him to head at once for Paardeberg Drift, near which two days later Cronje was cornered. Unfortunately the cable had been cut by the Boers' wagons, and the order had to be taken by a mounted officer, who did not reach French in time to arrest his movement on the 16th to the north of Kimberley. Not only did this delay his arrival at Paardeberg, but the extra march under a burning sun effectively knocked up his horses.

An Infantry Brigade of the Sixth Division under Knox, together with General Hannay's Mounted Infantry, was immediately sent in pursuit of Cronje, and in the afternoon Kitchener telegraphed to Roberts:

4 P.M.—Have returned from Knox's Brigade, which had been cleverly held back by Boers, who fight an excellent rearguard action. He has turned them out of three successive positions. There are a good many things in our force that require improvement. . . . Our casualties to-day have been, up to the present, two men killed, and one officer and 22 N.C.O.'s and men wounded. I would propose that Knox's Brigade should bivouac about Paardeberg Drift, to which point I had hoped the M.I. and Artillery would have

gone early, only unfortunately they stopped far short of it.[1] The supply question is becoming acute. I will wire later on the subject. (16.2.00.)

The supply difficulty was to some extent alleviated by the discovery that Cronje had been forced to abandon a number of his wagons to the north of Klip Drift, and in the evening Kitchener could tell Roberts that he had annexed

78 wagons and 4 carts of sorts, ammunition 2 wagons full of small arms (Mauser) as well as small amount of different sorts in every wagon—8 boxes full of shells, 10 barrels of explosives, about 2 wagon-loads of mealies, 5 or 6 wagon-loads of Boer meal, and a quantity of coffee, sugar, tobacco, rusks, and biltong. I also send you a bottle of Cronje's best champagne herewith. The last news of Cronje is good. They have outspanned and our guns are firing into their laager, creating consternation. I hope to-morrow to worry them, and if French comes we will probably break them up.

I am sorry to say that the wire is cut between us and also to Kimberley. I hope soon to repair, but should be glad if you would send me out the officer in charge of telegraphs here and a section of the telegraph troop so that I can keep up connection as we follow Cronje. He should bring 100 miles of line. (16.2.00.)

Roberts replied:

JACOBSDAL, 16.2.00.

As soon as I heard from you that Knox's Brigade was in pursuit of Cronje's convoy, I telegraphed to Enslin and asked the C.O. to heliograph the message on to Kimberley. It was to the effect that French should proceed in a south-

1 The Mounted Infantry—later in the campaign to win Kitchener's highest encomiums—had been too hastily raised to be quickly efficient, and many of them were stiff and saddle-sore after long rough rides on half-broken animals. Likewise the Sixth Division were leg-weary after double marches to catch up the cavalry, and this when a little "soft" after the long sea-voyage. Thus from ill-fortune rather than from any fault, the pursuit was not marked by the energy for which Kitchener burned.

easterly direction *via* Boschvarkfontein, and endeavour to cut off the convoy which is evidently intended for Bloemfontein. I hope my telegram will reach French in time to admit of his being with you early to-morrow. I trust you will be able to capture the convoy.

Colvile's [1] Division should be at Klipkraal Drift by daybreak, Smith-Dorrien's [2] Brigade marching through Rondavel Drift, and MacDonald's Brigade marching direct from Wegdraai Drift. With the latter I am sending all the Mounted Infantry available, except a squadron of Kitchener's Horse and the C.I.V. There is a great deal of escort work between this and the Modder River, and this and Honeynest Kloof, and some Mounted Infantry are necessary.

I have had great trouble about supplies. Richardson will send to-night 2 days' supplies for the Sixth and Seventh Divisions, and to-morrow night four more days', and I will see that more are forwarded; but we shall have to open up the railway south of Bloemfontein, or we shall run short, for ox-wagons cannot be depended upon for any great distance.

I received the following telegram from the Queen to-day: "Pray express my satisfaction to General French and those under him on his brilliant success. I trust the sick and wounded are doing well, and that you and Lord Kitchener are well."

Kitchener was in the saddle at dawn on the 17th, and at once joined General Knox [3] on the north bank of the Modder, while the Mounted Infantry under Hannay were ordered to Paardeberg Drift by the south bank, to be followed by the remainder of Kelly-Kenny's Division.

Early this same morning Kitchener got into touch

1 Major-General Sir Henry Colvile.
2 Later Lieut.-General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien.
3 Major-General Sir Charles Knox.

with Colvile, who with the Ninth Division had reached Klip Drift after a long night march, and ordered him to move on Paardeberg that afternoon, while French had started from Kimberley at 4.30 A.M., with such cavalry as he had been able to collect, for the same place. Thus the net was being drawn round Cronje, who, still cocksure of his ability to outmarch his slow-moving pursuers, was in no anxiety. He had succeeded in slipping away from Hannay, and was just moving his wagons down to the Modder at Vendutie Drift—the next crossing above Paardeberg—when French's guns opened upon him from the north. A scene of wild confusion at once ensued, the oxen scattering over the veldt and most of the native drivers deserting; Cronje had to choose between abandoning the wagons, which he treasured as the chief capital of the Boer farm, and fighting it out round them. The stout old Commandant, believing that help was at hand, began without hesitation to entrench himself at Vendutie Drift. He had with him some 5000 burghers, and knew that Ferreira with nearly 3000 of the Free Staters, who had been sitting down before Kimberley, was not far off. A detachment of Ferreira's Boers under De Beer was in fact only some six miles to the north, at Koedoesrand, but a weak force of French's cavalry held them up through the day. De Wet with about 1000 men was also in the neighbourhood, and had pounced upon a large British ox convoy at Waterval Drift on the Riet River on the 15th. Another small body of Free Staters under Commandant Steyn was south of Koedoesrand on the left bank of the river. Other Boer contingents were known to be on their way from Colesberg and from Ladysmith,

so that Cronje expected an immediate reinforcement which would double his commando.

By Kitchener's orders two Infantry divisions, a brigade of Mounted Infantry, and French's Cavalry had all converged on Paardeberg, and were within striking distance of the Boer laager at dawn on the 18th. Since the previous afternoon it had become clear to Roberts, who was detained at Jacobsdal by indisposition, that a battle was imminent and that Kitchener's status must be strengthened. The Chief of the Staff was in fact junior to all the Divisional Commanders,[1] and had hitherto been acting on telegraphic instructions from Lord Roberts, which he could produce when necessary. Continued reference to the Commander-in-Chief would obviously be impossible during a battle, and as Roberts desired Kitchener to have the complete control he wrote to Kelly-Kenny, the senior Divisional General:

JACOBSDAL, *February* 17, 1900.

I hope you are pushing on with all possible speed to overtake Cronje's laager. It is of the utmost importance it should not get away. . . . I hope to join you to-morrow; meanwhile please consider that Lord Kitchener is with you for the purpose of communicating to you my orders, so that there may be no delay such as references to and fro would entail. If we can deal Cronje a heavy blow, it is likely that there will be no more fighting in the Orange Free State.

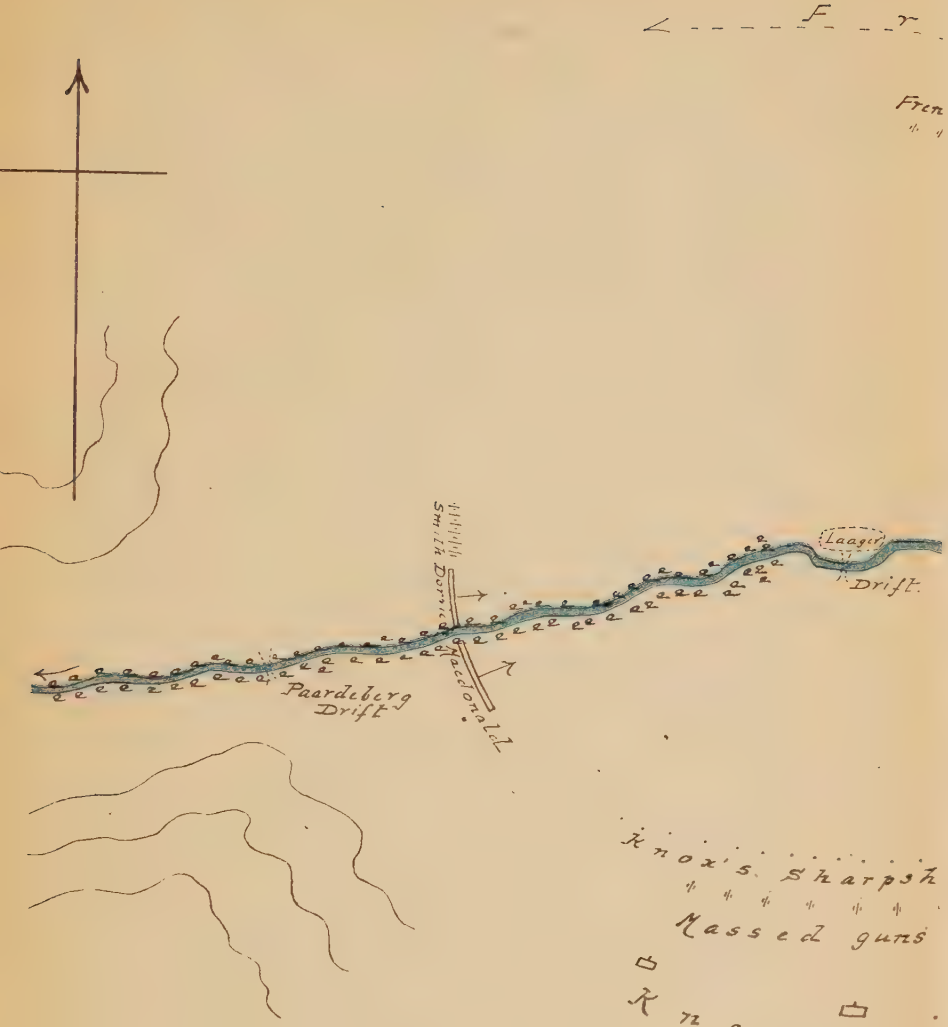
This arrangement was far from ideal, for Kitchener had with him none of the machinery required for the command of a force of nearly 20,000 men scattered over a wide area. He was accompanied only by two Staff officers and his personal aides-de-camp; he had no members of the H.Q. Staff, signalling per-

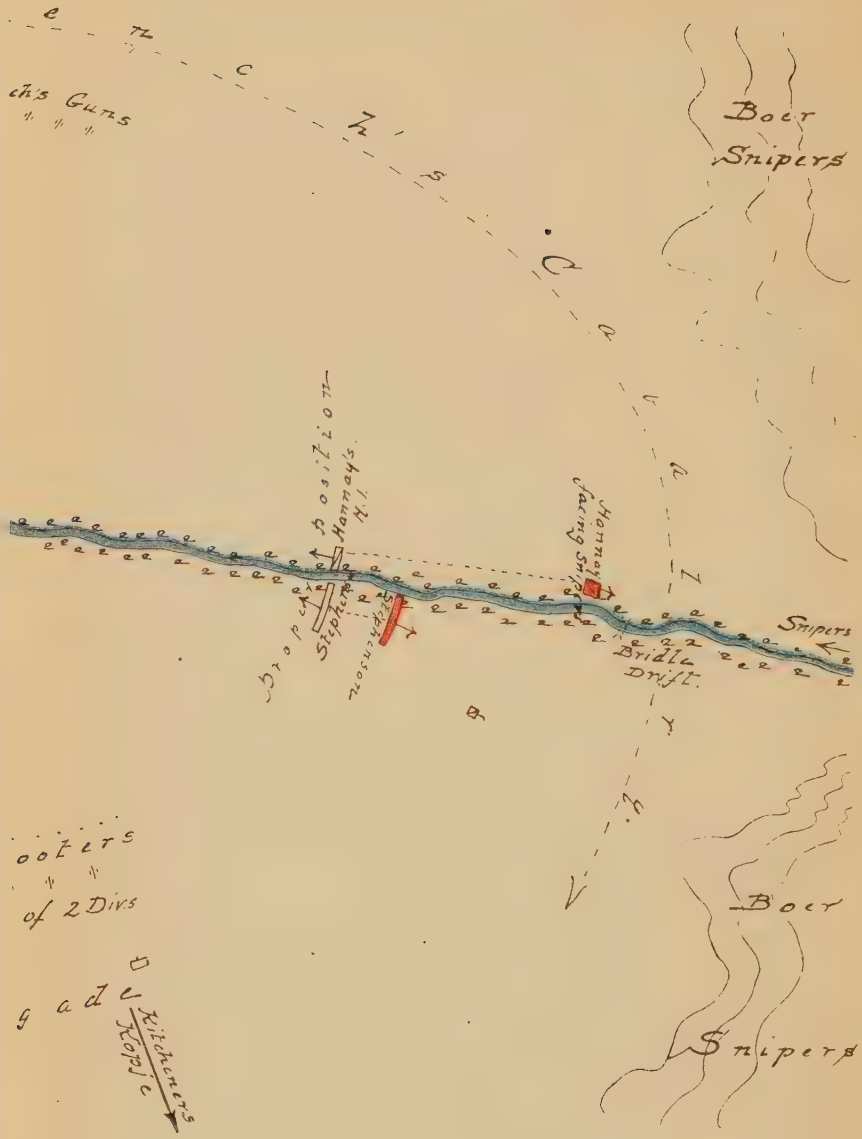
1 Higher local rank had been given to them in the War.

sonnel, gallopers, or orderlies, and with this meagre staff was to conduct his first battle against a white enemy equipped with modern arms. Lord Roberts knew and believed in him and did not know Kelly-Kenny—reason enough for the Field-Marshal's action; but it was a curious oversight that, when vesting Kitchener with supreme control in an engagement to which he attached such importance, he omitted to provide his deputy with the means of exercising the authority which he delegated.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Kitchener, in his eagerness to press the pursuit, and determined that Hannay should not again lose touch, spent the night of the 17/18th on a hill with the Mounted Infantry near Paardeberg Drift, and there formed his plan of battle. Before his orders reached Kelly-Kenny the latter had begun to move towards the Drift with the intention of crossing to the right bank. Thus the Sixth Division would have found itself behind instead of in front of Cronje—by no means what Kitchener wanted. Kitchener galloped to Kelly-Kenny and wheeled him round, and the sun shone out just as the two Generals, with the advanced guard, topped the last rise which had hidden from their view the valley of the Modder. As the Division moved up into position the full morning light struck the mass of white-roofed wagons which formed the enemy's laager, and also made visible the puffs of white smoke issuing from French's guns on the far bank, and there was not a man but felt that at last the redoubtable Boer was accounted for. Kitchener unhesitatingly decided to attack at once. He was aware that other Boer forces were hard by; he now knew definitely that French was in position on the north bank of the river, and that Colvile's Ninth


Laager
Drift
Paardeberg
Drift
Macdonald
Knox's Sharpsh
Massed guns
Knox's Bri



Boer
Snipers
Hanna's
Stephens
Snipers
Bridle
Drift.
Boer
Snipers
of 2 Divs
Kitcheners
Kopje

Division was arriving at Paardeberg Drift. He was therefore assured of adequate forces, and it was unquestionable that an immediate success would stagger the Free State. A bombardment would of course be less expensive in casualties, but would not close the avenue of escape for Cronje's burghers, would necessarily be slow in effect, and would give time for the scattered Boer forces in the neighbourhood to rally and hatch new devices. The question of losses weighed with Kitchener, then and always, as it must with any prudent commander in the field. The notion that in war he held human life cheap was as false as it was foolish. No officer was less willing to incur casualties without an adequate return; but if an adequate return were forthcoming—as at dawn on this 18th of February seemed sure—his one thought was that such sacrifice as might be necessary should not be in vain.

His plan of action was clear and simple. The bulk of Kelly-Kenny's Division was to engage the Boers in the river bed from the south, and French was to prevent their escape northwards; whilst Colvile with the Ninth Division attacked up-stream from the west, and Hannay's Mounted Infantry, supported by a brigade from Kelly-Kenny, moved down-stream from the east. The success of the plan in fact depended upon the timing of the attacks, which, to be effective, should have been simultaneous. The thick belt of mimosa scrub along the river-banks and the deep channel of the Modder afforded the Boers excellent covered communication between their flanks, and they could move unseen to meet successive and disjointed onslaughts, unless pinned at all points to their ground. If effective orders are to be given for

a simultaneous effort of converging troops, it is essential that the exact positions of the units should be known, that precise estimates should be made of the time required to reach the jumping-off points, and—most important of all—that each integer of the force should know how, and when, and where the remainder is to act—in a word, meticulous staff work is indispensable, and for this at Paardeberg no adequate staff was on the spot.

The troops had arrived upon the battle-field from north, south, and west, and some of the commanding officers, eager to get to business, and unaware that the Chief of the Staff was in supreme command, had started movements of which he was not informed and which conflicted with his intentions. Kitchener and his small Staff endeavoured to compensate by personal activity for the lack of appropriate machinery and of systematic preparation; but this resulted more than once in orders being given to troops without the knowledge of their immediate superiors, and some degree of confusion and uncertainty ensued. The assaults—and notably that of the gallant Hannay, who fell in a fine attempt to rush the laager—were delivered with superb gallantry, but failed of supreme success because, not being co-ordinated, each could be checked as it occurred. Even so, before dusk the infantry had gradually narrowed the circle held by the enemy, and had established themselves close up to his main line of defence. One more attack would have carried the day, but it was prevented by a powerful diversion in another part of the field. Just south-east of, and dominating, the laager lay "Kitchener's kopje," which Kelly-Kenny had occupied early in the day with infantry. These

had been ordered off without Kelly-Kenny's knowledge by one of Kitchener's Staff, who, aware of his Chief's intentions, used them to reinforce the attack on the laager from the east and replaced them with a party of Kitchener's Horse. This newly raised regiment was a little raw, and the detachment on the kopje allowed itself to be surprised by De Wet, who swooped down upon them from the east with a few hundred burghers. The first intimation that Kitchener and Kelly-Kenny received of the loss of the kopje was from the shells of a Boer pom-pom falling around them and amongst the transport of the Sixth Division parked close in rear. The pressure of Steyn's Boers at Koedoesrand was becoming very awkward, and troops had to be switched off the laager to parry a new danger. Thus the chance of carrying Cronje's lines that day was gone.

Kitchener reported at nightfall:

> We did not succeed in getting into the enemy's convoy, though we drove the Boers back a considerable distance along the river bed. The troops are maintaining their position, and I hope to-morrow we shall be able to do something more definite. Late this afternoon the Boers developed an attack on our right, which is still going on, but is kept under control by our artillery. Our casualties have, I fear, been severe, owing to the bush fighting near the river; and I have not been able to get lists yet, but will send them as soon as possible. (18.2.00.)

The casualties, in fact, amounted to 85 officers and 1185 other ranks killed, wounded, and missing—losses then considered serious, but which in the bitter fighting of the European War would have been mentioned as light. The battle had definitely failed to realise Kitchener's hopes of the morning, but, still

convinced that a decisive blow was of paramount importance, he was prepared to renew his offensive. Roberts, however, reached Paardeberg early on the 19th, and, anxious to avoid a further list of casualties, determined in favour of an investment of the laager.

No event in Kitchener's career has been more criticised than this battle of Paardeberg, and much of the criticism is reasonable, for in his maiden effort to co-ordinate the movements of large bodies of troops dispersed over a wide field his tactical conduct of the fighting was technically faulty. Circumstances for which he was not responsible denied him from the outset the signal success he sought to secure, and he possibly did not realise that, situated and staffed as he was, he could not effectively command the forces placed under his orders. On the other hand, his general conception of the battle was unquestionably correct, and his military instinct in deciding to assault was indubitably sound.

As Kitchener foresaw, the investment of Cronje, protracted over several days, gave the burghers of the Free State just the breathing time that they required, and they were able with revived courage to muster anew their forces—now strengthened by the late besiegers of Ladysmith—for opposing Roberts's march to Bloemfontein. The shock of the relief of Kimberley and of the rounding-up of Cronje passed off, and the threatened collapse of the Free State's resistance was averted by the personal exertions of Kruger and Steyn.

Thus to the delay at Paardeberg may be ascribed the still longer delay when Bloemfontein was reached. Nor did investment, as opposed to assault, prove in the long run any economy in life. For ten

days the British forces lay around the laager drinking the waters of the Modder fouled by the rotting carcases of Cronje's slaughtered horses and oxen. The stench in the laager at the time of Cronje's surrender was so overpowering as to overcome the curiosity of all save the most hardy of the victors, and the rain which followed the battle of the 18th washed its filth into the river. So, when Bloemfontein was reached, the poison in the blood of the troops, who were weakened by long marches and short rations, broke out in an epidemic of enteric which accounted for many more lives than were lost in the assaults upon Cronje's lines.

Kitchener—as was his wont—was taking the long view both when he determined to attack on the 18th and when he sought to renew the attempt on the following morning; and if his methods in the battle were inevitably incorrect, his broad grasp of the situation—more especially in its relation to the future—was correct in itself and stands vindicated in the light of the later story of the campaign.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER XXXVI

Nearly three years later Kitchener, writing to Sir Ian Hamilton, gave his own note on the battle:

DELHI, *Xmas Day.*

MY DEAR JOHNNY—Many happy returns of the day.

I am sending you herewith a copy of a letter I wrote to French on the subject of Paardeberg. I have added a few points to the original note which I wrote out on the manœuvres in a great hurry. . . .

It is 11 A.M. and so cold I can hardly hold my pen. We are now having nothing but rehearsals for the great Durbar.

I hardly expect I shall see much of Curzon until I reach Calcutta on the 24th January after my first trip to the frontier.

I hope your new guns and rifles are being pushed forward. Ask Slater to write me a line how things are going.

Rawley turned up here in great spirits.

Is there any hitch about Parsons coming? Please send him as I want something up to date in artillery. I like what I have seen of the 30-pr. battery. It has the advantage of heavy guns and moves easily with horse draught. It is, I believe, experimental out here.

Tents are bitterly cold—it freezes hard at nights.—Yours ever, K.

I am quite willing to accept the full responsibility for the battle of Paardeberg. As a matter of fact, putting aside local South African rank, I was the senior officer in the Army present.

On arrival on the ground, my first business was to get into communication with General French on the north side of the river. This was done at once, and I explained to him the situation. He told me that he could hold the enemy from any attempt to escape north, and that he could deal with the few unimportant snipers who had come up from the east to help Cronje, but that his horses and men were too done up to take any part in the attack on the enemy. I fully recognised the justice of this, and made my plans with the force at my disposal.

The river Modder at Koedoesrand Drift, which was the scene of the fight, runs approximately from east to west through an open country sloping to the river, but with steep banks 25 to 30 feet high. The river is very winding, and the banks are covered with scrub, whilst close to the river are some trees of considerable size. Cronje's wagons were huddled together in a confused mass, immediately on the north side of the Drift, where there was some open

ground clear of scrub, and where the river makes a loop or bend to the south. All his men and animals were hidden in the river bed. I had four brigades of infantry and the M.I. at my disposal, besides a few mounted troops, such as Kitchener's Horse, used to hold the ground.

The guns and one brigade took up a position immediately south of the enemy's laager, opposite the Drift. General French's guns were on the north side supported by his men. On the west, I sent Smith-Dorrien's brigade with a battery of artillery across the river to the north bank, and directed an attack by the two brigades of Colvile's division, Smith-Dorrien and MacDonald, up the river-banks towards the laager.

I sent for Colonel Hannay, and explained very carefully to him the rôle I wished his M.I. to take. They were to go east to a bridle drift General French had told me of, cross the river and work down the north bank, whilst Stephenson's brigade supported them on the south bank. We discussed the possibility of their coming under fire from MacDonald's and Smith-Dorrien's attack from the west, and decided that, owing to the slight change of direction made by the river, there was not much danger of this if they took care. I told Hannay that he should take all his Mounted Infantry and creep up as close as possible to the laager, and wait until the western attack had developed and was engaging the Boer forces; he should then, if possible, rush the laager, and capture all the Boer wagons, etc., supported by Stephenson on the south side of the river, and having the ground prepared for him by the whole of our artillery at close ranges; also that he should signal to me through Stephenson the exact positions held by the enemy, so that I could enfilade them with the artillery fire both from north and south.

The attack from the west commenced, and shortly afterwards from my central position I saw that Stephenson's brigade, which had been sent round east out of range to get on to the river opposite the M.I. and support them, was

facing east, and apparently doing nothing. I sent my A.D.C. to find out the meaning of this, and later my senior staff officer, Colonel [Hubert] Hamilton. My A.D.C. brought me back word that the brigade were carrying out my orders to support the M.I. who were facing east, apparently about to advance against the small body of snipers on the eastern ridges, which General French had told me of, and for which he was responsible. About the same time I received a message from Colonel Hannay to say that he could not get on. I sent him a strongly worded message that he must at once carry out my original instructions, and pay no attention to the snipers on the east, otherwise he would be too late to take advantage of the attack from the west, which was then rapidly developing. I also pointed out that by his action General Stephenson's brigade was being led quite wrongly, and could give no assistance to the western attack. I also sent orders to the brigade to get into the position assigned to them on the river facing west.

This was done, but it was too late to assist the western attack, and Colonel Hannay nobly sacrificed his life in a futile dash on the laager.

Under our heavy artillery fire from both banks, it was certainly, to my mind, extraordinary that the Boers were able to hold the western attack in check, and had their rear been threatened at the right moment I think they would have hardly succeeded in maintaining their position. This, however, was not done owing to the above circumstances, and their resistance proved that, when cornered in a hole like a badger, they are hard to draw and can show their teeth.

Lord Roberts never expressed or implied any censure on me for the battle. He regretted, with me, that it had not been more successful, but he knew full well that, had the action not taken place, he would never have been able to send the telegram that Cronje and 4000 men had surrendered; for, with 4000 mounted men, it was quite easy

for Cronje to break through either French or myself during the next night before reinforcements came up, and with small loss, as we have since seen Boers do so successfully, even when barbed wire and blockhouses were round them.

The action of Paardeberg, however, only left Cronje with twenty horses all told. During the attack we captured all his trek oxen, every other animal being killed, and thus, rendered immobile, the Boers were at Lord Roberts's mercy, and could not escape.

Instead of penitently acknowledging my error, as one writer considers I should, I maintain that it was the only course to pursue, and that had I allowed Cronje to escape after all the exertions I had called for and received from the army, I should be most rightly censured, and have lost the confidence of the troops.

It was in no frenzy, but with the most deliberate view of my responsibility in the matter, that I decided on the attack, which I maintain is very erroneously described as a frontal attack. As a matter of fact, it was an all-round attack, as the artillery from north and south outflanked and enfiladed in every way the positions taken up by the enemy to resist the attacks from east and west.

I believe every general on the ground agreed with me that, under the circumstances, an attack on Cronje's force was the right action to take; certainly not one of them suggested any other course.

CHAPTER XXXVII

The days immediately following Lord Roberts's arrival were spent in making good the lines of investment round the Boer laager and in ejecting De Wet from Kitchener's kopje. This clearance of the British right suggested to Roberts that he might send the Cavalry on to Bloemfontein, without waiting for Cronje to surrender. But if the Cavalry were to be fed when they reached the Free State capital, railway communication must be opened with Naauwpoort, which Major-General Clements was covering with the force that had relieved French at Colesberg.

Clements had just held his ground, but the Commander-in-Chief was anxious to propel him across the Orange River, and to fit his operations in with those of Brabant and Gatacre, who were to advance along the railway lines converging on Springfontein Junction.

He therefore sent his Chief of the Staff to Clements on the 22nd with fresh instructions:

You are to proceed to Naauwpoort and assist Lt.-Col. Girouard in pushing the railway across the Orange River as soon as the enemy vacate the country in the south. The Norval's Pont bridge is reported to be so strongly fortified, and the ground immediately north of the river in that direction to be so difficult, that the Bethulie bridge would ap-

pear to be the one we could secure the more easily. This would require assistance from General Gatacre's [1] troops, and you are authorised to call upon him for such assistance as he may be able to afford. As Brabant [2] pushes forward, and the enemy's numbers decrease, Gatacre will doubtless be able to occupy Stormberg.

Kitchener was with Clements at Arundel on the 24th, but the next day he heard from Roberts that the swelling of the Boer forces about Poplar Grove, to the east of Cronje's laager, had obliged him to discard the idea of sending French to Bloemfontein. Clements, whose infantry [3] were trying to repeat the cavalry game of bluff at Colesberg, was therefore to confine himself to covering Naauwpoort; Kitchener, after arranging the eventual railway communication to Bloemfontein, rejoined headquarters.

Just before he left Arundel he learnt that Cronje had succumbed, and wrote to Roberts:

Congratulate you most warmly on Cronje's surrender. Clements is driving in enemy on his right to-day, and he will, I hope, reoccupy Rensberg to-morrow. I think force in front of him is much reduced, but in this country a few men and guns take a good deal of turning out. Girouard has made all the arrangements you wanted. I have finished all arrangements here and shall return to you. (25.2.00.)

On his way back he spent a day at De Aar, the important junction of the railways to Cape Town and Port Elizabeth. Here events called for his at-

1 Gatacre's force lay opposite Stormberg, with Brabant's Colonial Division on his right.

2 Major-General Sir E. Brabant.

3 "I came away Thursday afternoon (February 22) with K., who was sent to see the course of events beyond Naauwpoort and Sterkstroom. They don't seem promising—we want more mounted men. Infantry are very little use in this country. When we have 50,000 of them mounted we may do some good; but I don't expect much till then, and all this takes time." (Diary of Col. Hubert Hamilton.)

tention; for, as a counter to Roberts's entry into the Orange River Colony, rebellion had shown its head in the western part of Cape Colony. On February 15 a mixed force of about 600 rebels and Boers under Liebenberg and Steenekamp, with two field-guns, crossing the Orange River just below its junction with the Vaal, had occupied Prieska. The district was proclaimed to be Free State territory, and British subjects who declined citizenship of the Free State were given eight days' notice to quit. A War Commission was formed, and within a week a commando of 300 rebels had been collected and armed. Agents were sent out in every direction, and the movement spread like a bush-fire.

Sir Alfred Milner, the High Commissioner, urged on Roberts the necessity of checking it before it should assume perilous proportions and inflame neighbouring districts. The immediate danger lay, not in the importance of the affected area, which, although large, was thinly populated and unproductive, but in its position and its inherent possibilities for harm. The railway ended on its eastern border, and was therefore open to attack, especially at the railway junction of De Aar, through which were passing all supplies for the main British Army. Kitchener met General Settle, who was in charge of this section of the line of communications, at De Aar on the 28th, and arranged to send out small columns to deal with the rebels. The centre column, under Colonel Adye,[1] was to advance from Britstown on Houwater; Colonel Sir Charles Parsons with the Western Column, 450 strong, was to march on Carnarvon and Kenhardt from Victoria West; while

1 Afterwards Major-General Sir John Adye.

Settle was to clear the river-banks, hold the drifts due west from Orange River station, and cut off Liebenberg.

Three days later, on rejoining Roberts at Osfontein Farm, a little distance east of Cronje's very odoriferous laager, Kitchener heard of Buller's victory at Pieters Hill and entrance into Ladysmith, and wrote in good spirits to Lord Salisbury:

Before you get this we ought to be in Bloemfontein. Our great difficulty is transport, and this is greatly increased by the large number of mounted troops we have, entailing enormous supplies of forage.

Mounted troops are of the greatest value here, as the enemy cannot stand having their positions turned, and are so mobile that to do so with anything but mounted troops and horse artillery is generally impossible. The Boers shoot very well at long range, but their Maxim-Nordenfeld 1-pounder automatic, though it at first frightens men, does very little harm. I saw it firing the other day at some dozen cavalry, and, although the shells were striking the ground all round, one of the men got off and picked up an unexploded shell.

The enemy are not very enterprising, I am glad to say; it is quite astonishing the way they keep under cover, and with smokeless powder it is almost impossible to see even where they are firing musketry from, and their guns are sometimes invisible. The Free Staters seem to have very little heart in the war, and there is certainly a good deal of feeling between the Transvaalers and them. The former are much the finer men in every way, and I expect will make a long and stubborn resistance before they give in. They believe that, when deported, all their land will be taken away and given to Englishmen. I think it will be a good thing to reassure them on this point.

Lord Roberts is very fit and well. The day before

yesterday he rode into Kimberley, 26 miles, and yesterday we rode back here again.

The Kimberley people were most enthusiastic, but outwardly there is not much show of damage done by the bombardment. I hope Buller will send us a Division and as many mounted men as possible. We have none too many for this war. Gatacre's column and Clements's column are both very weak in mounted men. The Colonial troops seem a very useful lot, and I hope, when organised, they will do good service, as the Canadians have already done.

We shall require some time at Bloemfontein to reorganise; a great deal has to be done. (3.3.00.) [1]

Lord Salisbury, when replying to this letter, told Kitchener that after exhaustive inquiry he was satisfied that no munitions of war were being introduced through Lorenzo Marques, and he went on to suggest a method of preventing or hindering any importation of food-stuffs:

The line from Kumati Poort to Pretoria passes over one —I believe over two—great bridges. The distance of Kumati Poort from the British frontiers is about eighty miles. If you can destroy those bridges thoroughly, the Boers will have great difficulty in replacing them, because their conveniences for iron manufacture on a large scale are limited. But if the bridges are destroyed—and still more if a fair stretch of the line is made worthless—the importation of food-stuffs will be arduous and slow. I fancy importation on a large scale by ox-wagon will not be easy—

1 To Mr. Ralli: "Thank goodness, our first move has done wonders, and I know how rejoiced every one must be. I feel we must be cautious to keep up our reputation, as there is considerable weakness from want of organisation and training in our Army. You have no idea what work I had to get the troops on so as to catch Cronje. The E.A. play a considerable rôle in this force, and are keeping up their reputation well. They are not cramped, like all the others. We are just a little too much all together for my liking; but probably the Chief is right. There is a German proverb—'When the trees grow highest, look out.' So I mean to." (4.3.00.)

for the ground will be soft, and there will be no grass on the veldt.

Surely it would be worth your while to make a raid on the railway from Zululand. After so poor a harvest, the Boers, who seldom grow more than they want, are likely to be hard put to it for food, if the war lasts many months longer.

Excuse me for having detained you for so long on a subject which naturally has seldom been absent from my thoughts.

The first of Queen Victoria's many letters to Kitchener in South Africa told him that an old and vicious enemy had been finally laid by the heels:

OSBORNE, *February* 2, 1900.

The Queen-Empress must write Lord Kitchener a line to congratulate him on the capture of Osman Digna, which puts a final stroke to Lord Kitchener's brilliant and successful campaign in the Sudan. If only we were as far in the very severe one now before us!

Pray write when you can, and do so in the first person, as it is so much easier to write.

The Queen hopes to hear from Lord Roberts also, but does not like to press him in the midst of so much anxiety and sorrow.

We are all well (but naturally very anxious, though not discouraged) and full of confidence in you and Lord Roberts.

God bless and protect my dear, heroic soldiers!

Roberts was now bending himself to Bloemfontein, but neither the defeat of Cronje nor the relief of Ladysmith could turn De Wet from his set purpose of blocking his path to the Free State capital. He was stimulated by the presence of both Kruger and Steyn, and flattered himself that his force—now astride the drift at Poplar Grove—about 5000

strong, would soon be doubled. Roberts proposed to dislodge his dour opponent, then to entangle his force in the various drifts on the Modder River, and finally to cut off his retreat on Bloemfontein. French was ordered to make a wide detour south of the Modder River, and get behind the Boer position. Flank attacks were then to be made by the Sixth and Ninth Divisions, while a holding frontal attack was to be carried out by the Seventh Division.

French marched out of Osfontein early in the morning of March 7, but when day broke, instead of being well in rear of the Boers, he was about two miles south of their left flank and in full view of them. The enemy at once spotted an enveloping movement, and withdrew towards the river. Thus, when our troops eventually converged on Poplar Grove, De Wet had retired along the river practically unpunished, and the excursion, which had promised so brightly, panned out poorly.

The retreat of the Boers, however, which commenced in leisurely fashion, soon degenerated into a formless flight, due to dismay at the rapidity and ease with which they had been thrust out of a stronghold. They draggled past Kruger himself, who sought with impassioned harangues to rally them for the defence of Bloemfontein. Eventually a certain number called a halt: a little later some others took heart of grace and a stand was made at Abraham's Kraal, where De la Rey took command.

Roberts had split his force into three columns, which were to march by different routes to a point south of the city, cut the railway, and turn the enemy's flank. French led the left column, which came in for the brunt of such fighting as there was.

Kelly-Kenny, in command of the infantry of this column, turned De la Rey out of Driefontein in a smart and well-combined action, and the Boer force, as usual, vanished in the darkness with exhausted cavalry in weary pursuit. On March 12 French cut the railway just south of Bloemfontein, and next morning Roberts rode into the town.

The Boers were now completely disillusioned as to their ability to hold their own in anything like a stand-up fight; but there were already signs which foreboded the later roving character of their campaign.

On March 7 Adye's column, one of the three which Kitchener had organised at De Aar for the suppression of the rebellion in the Cape Colony, met with an ugly reverse, and on the day after the action at Poplar Grove Roberts hurried Kitchener to the spot, ordering certain troops from Cape Town to meet him. He reached De Aar on March 10 to find that Adye had fallen back to Britstown, where he had been reinforced. Kitchener decided to accompany the Britstown column, now strengthened to 3000 men. He adhered to Settle's original plan, under which the two columns were to converge on Prieska and cut off the retreat of Liebenberg and Steenekamp across the Orange River, while Parsons was to advance on Kenhardt. But the Boers did not wait. Liebenberg, threatened in front by Kitchener and in rear by Settle, hurried out of Houwater and sat across the road near Doornberg Nek, about thirty miles from Prieska. But with Kitchener following him up, and Settle by forced marches getting the drifts in his rear, Liebenberg had no choice but to bolt through Prieska across the Orange River.

On March 18 Kitchener made a spurt of forty miles with his mounted men, but just missed his quarry at Prieska, and his horses could go no farther. Settle, on Kitchener's instructions, chased Steenekamp's force out of Zoutpan, and then joined him at Prieska on March 21, by which date Parsons was half-way to Kenhardt.

The spirit of the rebels fizzled out; Liebenberg and Steenekamp were making their way to the Transvaal, and Settle was left to deal with a few rebel detachments south of the Orange River. The Transvaalers and Free Staters and many of the chief offenders in the Colony had escaped to the country north of the river, but the rebel War Committee was under lock and key. Arms were seized and ringleaders were kept in custody, minor malcontents being bound over. Small garrisons were left at Upington, Kenhardt, and Prieska, and a force of 150 Basuto Scouts under European officers was formed to patrol the district.

The revolt was in itself a trifling incident in the war, but trifling only because handled with energy.

> The rebels [a Staff Officer wrote] will all surrender now that their Boer friends have left them. They would not face a large force—at the same time they would not be left alone, and previous feeble efforts to disperse them having failed, I suppose Lord Roberts thought the Kitchener sledge-hammer was the only weapon left to use.

The Kitchener sledge-hammer had in fact pulverised a rebellion which might greatly have retarded Lord Roberts's advance. The lesson, accentuated by their being left in the lurch, was taken to heart by the Cape Colonists, and the districts which our columns had traversed remained free from

further disaffection, resisting even De Wet's blandishments when a year later he intruded into the Colony.

While the Prieska bubble was being burst Clements and Gatacre had crossed the Orange River, and, railway communication with Bloemfontein being opened, Kitchener fared there by train to rejoin headquarters on March 28. The Queen had again written to him after Paardeberg:

WINDSOR CASTLE, *February* 23, 1900.

The Queen wishes to write a line to Lord Kitchener to say how she follows him and Lord Roberts everywhere, and how we have been cheered by news of the past ten days, and are hoping for more good news. She knows, however, that we must be patient and not expect things to go too fast.

The Queen saw Lady Roberts, who had heard from Lord Roberts what a help Lord Kitchener was to him.

The many losses grieve the Queen very much, but she knows that they are unavoidable. She was so sorry for poor General MacDonald, but hopes his wound is not really severe. Pray tell him so from her.

Pray say everything kind from the Queen to Lord Roberts, and believe that no one thinks more constantly or prays more fervently for the well-being of her dear, brave soldiers of all ranks than she does.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

The work of reorganising and re-equipping the ragged army which had made its way into Bloemfontein had proceeded slowly, and Kitchener resigned himself to a spell of office work. Roberts had issued a proclamation offering all burghers of the Free State who had not taken a prominent part in the war safe conduct to their farms, and a guarantee that their property would be respected if they laid down their arms and swore to take no further part in the war. Many of these who had stood in the way to Bloemfontein grasped the olive branch, but the Boers who had been up against Gatacre and Clements in Cape Colony crossed the Orange River in good order, marched along the Basuto border, and posted 6000 men on Roberts's right flank near Ladybrand. This disturbing element, the need for large reserves of supplies and stores, and an outbreak of enteric—the effect of the poison absorbed at Paardeberg—combined to postpone the advance on the Transvaal proposed for the end of March.

Kitchener, fretting at the delay, wrote to Lady Cranborne:

> We are still here; it is very disappointing, but it is quite impossible to calculate on anything in this army. I must say I like having the whole thing cut-and-dried and worked

out; but people here do not seem to look upon the war sufficiently seriously. It is considered too much like a game of polo, with intervals for afternoon tea.

How it will end, and when, no one can possibly say. I try all I can day and night to get the machine to work, but a thorough reorganisation will have to take place before we can call ourselves a fighting nation. Officers and men are plucky enough, but that is not all we want to win.

There is a good deal of enteric, and we lose more men than I like.

Four years' continuous war is somewhat wearing, and I should like a little peace.

What, however, he seemed to want was not so much peace as another kind of fighting. "I hope," he wrote rather wistfully to another friend, "China is not going to give trouble too soon. I shall be quite ready to go there in three weeks if Lord Salisbury wishes." China troubles, however, were to come and go, while the Boer War rolled on.

Reinforcements from home were now flowing into South Africa at the rate of about 30,000 a month, and there were 70,000 men and 178 guns ready for the advance northwards. On March 29 Roberts easily took the line of the Karee hills, about 13 miles north of Bloemfontein, thus securing the railway bridge over the Modder.

But, though the forward movement promised well, a marked change was coming over the Boers. The death of Joubert on March 27 really opened a new chapter in the Boer war policy. Under his successor, Louis Botha, who took the title of Acting Commandant-General, the influence of the younger men became more pronounced, discipline was tightened up, clothing and transport were systematised. Much

was looked for from the mission which had proceeded to Europe just before the fall of Bloemfontein, and the fond hope that European Powers might intervene on their behalf spurred waverers to fight on.

After all, there was much to encourage the Boers in their resistance. Although they had lost some 10,000 men, they were quite strong enough to hold off the British until friends in Europe should speak up. They had plenty of provisions, and with the Transvaal open supplies were to be had in abundance. Their scouts had gauged Roberts's difficulties in respect of horses, transport animals, and supplies, while the line above Bloemfontein had been so mauled that the railway could not immediately do much to speed up the British advance.

De Wet was soon busy, and by the first week in April had dealt ugly blows both at Korn Spruit—where General Broadwood's cavalry and guns were ambushed—and at Reddersburg.

When the columns operating south of the Orange River were brought up into the Orange Free State, Clements made his way without any trouble to Bloemfontein. Gatacre was ordered to occupy Dewetsdorp if he felt strong enough; no serious opposition was anticipated, and the guns were taken from the column and sent to the capital. De Wet, learning that weak columns were afoot collecting arms and registering oaths, determined to stop any dry-rot. The British set-back at Korn Spruit on April 1 showed that the spirit of the Free Staters was by no means broken, and Roberts, fearing for the railway, ordered Gatacre to call in the various small columns and evacuate Dewetsdorp, which had only just been occupied by one of his detachments of 550

men. De Wet was soon on the track, and with 2000 men and four guns rushed the British position at Mosters Hoek, near Reddersburg, on April 4, the garrison surrendering to overpowering numbers just when Gatacre was close at hand.

The Boer leader next turned his attention to the isolated garrisons of Smithfield and Wepener. He found the former place empty, but the latter withstood a siege of sixteen days, when it was relieved by columns working under the supervision of Kitchener, who had been despatched to put things straight and carried a letter of authority in his pocket.

ARMY HEADQUARTERS,
BLOEMFONTEIN, *April* 5, 1900.

MY DEAR KITCHENER—In case any question should be raised as to your authority for carrying out arrangements in the districts where their troops are quartered, you should inform them that you are acting as my representative, and have been deputed by me to perform certain duties which no one else can do for me.—Believe me, yours very truly,

ROBERTS.

This mandate disposed of gossip current at the time that Roberts had been dissatisfied with Kitchener's attack at Paardeberg and had sent him off to Arundel to be out of the way. Had Roberts in any way disapproved of his lieutenant's action he would not at once have re-invested him with plenary powers and desired him to control the operations of generals who, by virtue of their local rank, were his seniors.[1]

The temporary suppression of De Wet in the south had the important result of clearing the railway; both reinforcements and supplies poured into

1 In the case of the Prieska rebellion no such authority had been necessary, as Kitchener was then dealing only with junior officers.

Bloemfontein, and preparations for the passage of the Vaal River took definite shape.

Roberts had to make up his mind whether he would at once strike northwards, or wait until such portions of the Free State as lay within reach were reduced to submission.[1] Remembering his own successful march from Kabul to Kandahar, stimulated by Kitchener, and perhaps impelled by the clamour at home for vigorous action towards finality, he ordered an advance into the Transvaal on a front extending from Ladysmith to Kimberley. On the left, at Kimberley, were Methuen and Hunter, each with about 10,000 men; in the centre, at Bloemfontein, were the troops immediately under Roberts, numbering about 43,000; forty miles to the right was General Ian Hamilton's column, consisting of the infantry brigades of Smith-Dorrien and Bruce Hamilton,[2] Broadwood's cavalry, and a Mounted Infantry brigade; and on the extreme flank in Natal was Buller, with 45,000 men.

The advance itself was, in skeleton form, the earliest of those drives which were hereafter to be wrought into an elaborate system.

De Wet's activities had caused more than one

1 A year later Roberts was writing to Kitchener:

"Milner takes exception to our having pushed on to Johannesburg and Pretoria before pacifying the Orange River Colony. He does not apparently appreciate that the Transvaal was the Boers' stronghold; that so long as Johannesburg and they were in direct communication with Lorenzo Marques they could get all the gold they required, as much ammunition, and as many guns and rifles as they needed; and that if they had been able to show that they could hold the Transvaal against us, numbers of foreigners would certainly have joined them, and it is within the bounds of possibility that one or other of the foreign nations might have interfered on their behalf. I have no doubt in my mind that we did the right thing. I never expected that the Orange River Colony would settle down, or that there would not be disturbances in Cape Colony, as we advanced farther north. It would have required an Army at least twice the size of ours to have prevented such things occurring."

2 Afterwards General Sir Bruce Hamilton.

change of date, and it was not until May 3 that a start was made from Bloemfontein. Nine days later Kroonstad was entered, when a halt was called to recruit French's jaded horses and to reconstruct the railway, the Boers in their retreat having blown up every bridge and destroyed many miles of the permanent way. Kitchener, who had remained with Roberts during a fairly smooth march, had to pull the transport together again at Kroonstad, where he occupied the President's house: "The Transvaal and Orange River Colony people are kept going by hopes of intervention," he wrote to a friend. "Steyn left all his papers, *Truth*, etc., with passages marked in favour of holding on and the justice of their cause." (15.5.00.)

CHAPTER XXXIX

On May 17 arrived the news that Mahon had joined hands with Baden-Powell at Mafeking, and three days later the northwards advance was resumed. French crossed the Vaal at Paris on the 24th, on which date Roberts proclaimed the annexation of the Orange Free State. Contrary to expectation, the enemy made no stand on the right bank of the Vaal, and Roberts, with the main body, easily entered the Transvaal on May 27, sleeping that night in the house occupied twenty-four hours earlier by Botha. He now proceeded to surround Johannesburg, where Steyn had persuaded Kruger not to blow up the mines, as otherwise the market for Orange State produce would be lost. The main force was ordered to occupy Elandsfontein on the east, while French with the Cavalry and Ian Hamilton with the Mounted Infantry, after dealing with the enemy forces south of the town, were to post themselves—French near Klipfontein south of the city, and Ian Hamilton near Florida to the west of it. The right and weakest part of the Boer position lay on Doornkop, which, on May 29, Ian Hamilton took—not without a tussle. Roberts then moved on Elandsfontein, and Johannesburg, thus gripped by him on the east, and by French and Ian Hamilton on the north and west, promptly unlocked its doors and was peacefully occupied.

Pretoria, the seat of Government, the centre of Kruger's influence, and the prison of 4000 British soldiers, was the next objective, and no disquieting reports from the Free State availed to hold Roberts back from it. On June 3 the move on Pretoria was resumed. It was an open question whether Botha, who had fallen back on the city, would seriously defend it; but, as a precaution, a siege train, which included two 9·45-inch howitzers, was taken along.

The Boer Government had already made arrangements to clear out to the east. Kruger himself, fearful lest his bolt-hole *via* Delagoa Bay should be closed to him, left for Machadsdorp on May 29, and Botha, with the forts stripped and evacuated, posted his attenuated force on a ridge slightly to the south of the city. The position was, of course, untenable, and French and Ian Hamilton closing in, Pretoria was in our hands on June 5.[1]

The entry into Pretoria was greeted as a glittering success for British arms, but proved even emptier of solid effect than the seizure of the sister capital. The Boers were getting their second wind, and De Wet was opening their eyes to the multiform possibilities of irregular warfare. They realised that the power of the British did not extend beyond the range of their rifles and guns, and was in effect confined to a narrow strip of country on either side of the railway line, leaving to them by far the greater part of their territory and sufficient resources to keep them in the field for many a long day.

1 Major-General (afterwards General Sir John) Maxwell was at once appointed Military Governor of the town. It is on record that, before leaving Khartum, Kitchener said, "As soon as we enter Pretoria Maxwell must be Military Governor, as no one will be able to deal so well with the Dutch."

To the Boer a town meant little, his farm meant everything, and the majority saw that their farms were as yet beyond our reach. They shrugged their shoulders at the loss of Pretoria, for they knew that our seat there meant a long line of communications which would invite attack by an enterprising and elusive enemy.

On June 11 Roberts fought the engagement against Botha at Diamond Hill in which each side claimed a success, the truth being that the British scored a victory without at first knowing it. Kitchener was away [1] with a column in the Free State, where De Wet was playing havoc in snatching garrisons and snapping communications, his smartest performance being the capture in rapid succession of the Heilbron Road Station, Roodeval, and Rhenoster River Bridge, where the Derbyshire Militia fought desperately from an unlucky position—these untoward incidents being themselves the sequel to a disaster suffered by Spragg's Convoy outside Lindley.

While Christian De Wet was thus busy, his "minor," Piet De Wet—whom, with fraternal frankness, he had threatened to shoot if he showed the white feather—was trying to draw Methuen into a pacific discussion, although it is highly unlikely that the pair could have seen eye-to-eye on any point. But Methuen was drawn from a proposed

1 "PRETORIA, *June* 7.—It is rather nice putting Pretoria as the address; but it is not going to be my address for long, as I have to be off to-day to look after our line of communication, which has been cut by these annoying Free State Boers. I hope I shall soon be able to put things right again. It was pleasant releasing the prisoners; some of the prisoner officers were quite overcome when the troops marched through the town with bands playing. I have to be off at a moment's notice. I have always to be the one to go, but I am glad to be useful, and it was very nice when the Chief thanked me after we got in town." (K. to Lady Cranborne.)

colloquy with one brother in order to join Kitchener in "going for" the other. On June 11 and 12 De Wet was pushed off the railway westward, but, trotting round in a circle, he recrossed it at Lieuw Spruit, between Rhenoster River Bridge and Heilbron Road Station. At the latter place he took fifty prisoners, but missed, not only the chance of his life, but the grand chance of his side in the war. Kitchener—who was with his staff bivouacking a few yards from the station, and had for the first time for several nights partially undressed—only escaped being taken by a precipitous rush to his horse and a headlong ride into the Yeomanry Camp a few miles off.[1]

Speculation was rife at the time as to what effect such a misadventure would have had on the war. The immediate result must have been grave. It is difficult to say how De Wet, in default of a fortress, could have retained hold of his captive; but a commander so independent of the trammels of military procedure would certainly have exploited his invaluable haul to the utmost. It is by no means impossible that, with Lord Roberts of Kandahar isolated in the Transvaal, and Lord Kitchener of Khartoum a prisoner of war, the British people itself might have been pushed or persuaded into a

1 A few months later Kitchener had another, though less critical, escape: "I went out the day before yesterday to explain to Lyttelton and Smith-Dorrien the prospected moves east; but when I got to Olifants River, 13 miles from Middelburg, I found the hill ahead, 5 miles from Middelburg, held by the Boers. We were stopped just in time, and got back to Olifants River. After some time I got Lyttelton to send out some troops to clear the hill, and when, after three hours, that was done, we started again, but the train ahead of us was blown up by a mine which the Boers had had time to lay, and the line was hopelessly blocked; so I returned." (To Roberts, 25.1.01.)

premature peace. Anyhow, a shudder would have gone through the whole country, and the army in the field would have had a shock from which it would not easily have recovered.

An even more interesting question is—How would Kitchener himself, his career, and the world at large have been affected? He always clung, perhaps a little too tenaciously, to the theory that death on the field of battle could never be matter for lament, but that capture—however unavoidable—spelt triumph for the captor and some indignity for the captured. "What does it matter if I am shot?—I have four brothers," was the protest of the boy Prince of Wales when pleading to be allowed to accompany his regiment to France in 1914. "If I were certain you *would* be shot, I do not know if I should be right to restrain you," was Kitchener's reply. "What I cannot allow is the chance—which exists until we have a settled line—of the enemy scoring you as a prisoner."

So in his own case. Had he been subjected to captivity, would not an irreparable blow have been dealt at his extraordinary prestige, more especially in the East, where his name had a meaning scarcely understandable by dwellers in the West?[1] He stood for the peoples in the East as a symbol, silent but significant. The arch-enemy of Mohammedan tyranny and misrule, he was the confidential friend of the Mohammedan. The man who had broken the sword of the Arab overlord and wrecked the tradi-

[1] In India, Kitchener Sahib was to provoke the awe and admiration of his soldiers, and he was known by fame to millions who never set eyes on him. Murmurs of "Shabash" would greet him when he appeared with his troops, and as he led his army past the saluting point on the occasion of a great review, native spectators were heard to say, "He should be a king!"

tions of his stronghold had a brotherhood with the individual Moslem: to the Oriental mind a strange blend of supremacy and sympathy. And then throughout his life—East and West—he did remain unbeaten. To have been always undefeated suggests the impossibility of defeat. The tradition of a man's invincibility hardens. His fame grows with compound interest until at last, if the Undefeated does go down, the world resents it as if it were a breach of law—as if the jade Fortune were at fault, or grim Fate had blundered. Napoleon's thick-and-thin admirers explain elaborately that he was not conquered on his merits at Waterloo. Imagination boggles at the idea of a defeated Nelson. Englishmen regard Marlborough and Wellington as invincibles, even as the ancients thought of Alexander and of Caesar and of Judas the Maccabee.

Nor is this blind confidence in a great man's star superstitious or illogical. It rests on a solid basis of fact and is of the nature of an inductive conclusion. Most of all does immunity from defeat appeal to mankind when wedded to anything like a heroic cause. The redeemer of the Sudan as the prisoner of a Boer outlaw would have outraged a scandalised world; in the East the thing would have been at first repudiated as unthinkable, and then accepted as marking a fall like Lucifer's. It would be felt that the luminary of his luck had set; the glamour of his name would fade. There are occasions when for the multitude the dethronement of a heroic figure is akin to the dissipation of religious faith.

CHAPTER XL

The dual attentions of Kitchener and Methuen were too much for De Wet, whose next retreat was into the Brandwater Basin—a stronghold enclosed by a semi-circle of mountains and the Great Caledon River. Kitchener returned to Pretoria and impressed on Roberts that affairs in the Free State could not be trifled with, and urged a simple but systematic campaign, in which, as a matter of fact, he foreshadowed his own later drives. Certain points were to be held in strength while four flying columns—based on the line Heidelberg—Heilbron—Lindley—Wynburg—Senekal—were to herd commandos into a pen. Ian Hamilton had unluckily broken his collar-bone and was replaced by Hunter, who took charge of the movement. Clements and Paget,[1] after having in the first days of July dealt successfully with an important leader of French extraction,[2] Roux, outside Bethlehem, were instrumental in pushing a large force into Brandwater Basin, where Roberts was encouraged to hope that 7000 men and De Wet himself might be cornered. The burghers, in uncomfortably close quarters, were torn by

1 Later General Sir Arthur Paget.

2 Kitchener used to say that he was always able to distinguish in conversation between the Boers of French extraction and those of more purely Dutch origin.

acrimonious discussions, Martin Prinsloo, with the majority, wishing to sit tight. De Wet, however, wisely determined to quit, and leaving instructions that every one should follow him twelve hours later, he escaped with 2600 men, 4 guns, and 460 wagons northwards over Slabbert's Nek. It is difficult to say whether De Wet believed his injunction would be obeyed, or deliberately left Prinsloo to stew in his own juice. But with the exception of one small band of Free Staters, De Wet was destined to see no more of the friends he had detached, the surrender of Prinsloo to Hunter occurring a fortnight later.

Broadwood, with all mounted men available, started—as quickly as a British column can start—in pursuit, and stuck to the fugitive's heels for a week, but was unable to prevent him from going into snug laager at Rhenosterpoort.

Roberts reckoned rightly that, unless De Wet were summarily suppressed, the war would drag on, and asked Kitchener—who was always ready to exchange the office for the field—to deal with the exasperating Boer farmer. "Chris"—as his oft-baffled and bewildered pursuers were wont to call him—was escorting Steyn, and had been shepherded up into the extreme north-west corner of the Free State, with the Vaal River in front of him. The idea was to preclude his doubling back into the Free State and force him across the river where Methuen was waiting to welcome him.

Kitchener reached Wonderheuvel on August 5, and next day the cordon containing De Wet on the south bank of the Vaal was tightly drawn, various drifts on the river and its tributary the Rhenoster being held by columns numbering in the aggregate 11,000

men. North of the Vaal a still larger force of 18,000 men was within call—Barton with 3000 at Krugersdorp; Smith-Dorrien on the railway; Ian Hamilton and Baden-Powell with 8000 men in the Magaliesberg; and Sir F. Carrington in charge of a column 2500 strong.

De Wet could pick and choose between a dozen crossings, on each of which Methuen with his rather exiguous force had to keep an eye. To Methuen was supposed to fall the prize, but here as elsewhere, while his purpose and performance were excellent, his luck was out. He had just made up his mind that Schoemans Drift would be the ford, when he was ordered down-stream to Scandinavia Drift and had to send some of his men to Winkels Drift. Three days later came his justification, for De Wet crossed where anticipated, and Methuen, hurrying eastward, was only able to overtake and tread on his rearguard at Tigersfontein, while De Wet himself was meandering northwards by an intricate track between the hills. As soon as Methuen's guns were heard by Kitchener, he brought up the columns from the south, and told Broadwood to seize a drift four miles to the west of De Wet's crossing-place. The 3rd Cavalry Brigade was to move north-west of the river, and General Ridley was to throw a patrol across it at Parys. On August 9 Kitchener, bent on blocking Lindeque so that De Wet should not double back over the river, arrived at that drift with the two Cavalry Brigades and Ridley's Mounted Infantry; he crossed the river early on the 10th, and directed the march nearly due north and well to the enemy's right.

Now began a breathless pursuit; at one moment

the British columns were so keen on the scent that their hopes rose to fever heat, only to be dashed again by a chill conviction that they had to reckon with evasiveness incarnate. For five days and nights the pace was sustained with little regard for repose or rations, and at such high pressure as really to "stretch" the Boer General.

Nor was Methuen a whit less energetic. Early on August 10, having begged Broadwood to keep his left shoulder up, he himself struck westward so as to sandwich the enemy effectively. But De Wet, enjoying the advantage of feeding on the country, cleverly eluded Smith-Dorrien, who—moving under protest to Bank Station—left a gap on the railway through which the Boers comfortably crept.

They had still the Magaliesberg range to negotiate; the only three passes were Magato Pass, Olifants Nek, and Commando Nek. At the latter was Baden-Powell, and it was understood that Ian Hamilton was sitting tight at Olifants Nek. Methuen, convinced that if he could block the Magato Pass the game would he ours, turned off from the direct track for that purpose.

Kitchener, after a specially toilsome march in a hideous dust-storm, arrived, with the Cavalry and Mounted Infantry, late on August 11 at Welverdiend, where he was joined by Smith-Dorrien. Still keeping to his right, Kitchener pressed on throughout the 12th, hampered by a bad drift, but not halting until long after dark, and starting again at 3 A.M. on the 13th, when Broadwood was instructed to press his horses to the utmost, and to have no thought for his baggage.

All were eagerly expectant of running the enemy

to earth, while, with every mile, his fate seemed more surely sealed, his abandoned horses and oxen everywhere leaving noxious witness to his failing powers.

On August 14 Broadwood started at 2 A.M., while the Mounted Infantry, who had bivouacked a few miles farther back, moved even earlier. Methuen, to keep the fugitives away from the West, sent off his mounted columns with half a day's ration at 1 A.M., and successfully drove them eastwards. Before daylight Broadwood was in touch with the Boer rearguard. Surely the hour had come; messages were sent back to Kitchener, who was bringing up the infantry with almost incredible speed. The all-absorbing thought in his mind was "Olifants Nek" —surely it must be all right. But "Chris" knew better. Ian Hamilton, misled by a clerical error in a telegram from Pretoria, instead of holding Olifants Nek, thought he could effectively block it by continuing his westward march, and De Wet, swinging sharply southwards under the mountains, slipped like an eel through the undefended Pass.

Kitchener confessed himself bitterly disappointed, but happily a bit of good news was at hand. The De Wet pursuit had to be switched off, but there was an immediate something to be done. A runner arrived with the intelligence that Colonel Hore, who with his force of 500 Australians was besieged by De la Rey at Brakfontein on the Elands River, had not—as false rumour had affirmed—succumbed. His garrison had been escorting a convoy, and had been happily able to take up a good position before being surrounded. A curiously abortive attempt at relief on the part of Sir F. Carrington had only served to redouble the attention of the besiegers, who

bombarded heavily by day and attacked by night to prevent a sortie even to procure water. Hore's dauntless energy and the dogged courage which foreshadowed the fighting spirit shown at Gallipoli [1] forbade any surrender, and Kitchener called on his sorely-tried mounted troops for a last sprint. Starting at dawn on August 15 he traversed the thirty-five miles at best speed, and rode into the Elands River Camp on the following morning, contemptuously brushing aside the slight resistance offered—chiefly in sniping form—by a few lingering besiegers, the bulk of whom had made off the previous evening.

As Roberts was now leaving Headquarters to superintend the north-easterly advance of French and Buller, Kitchener was ordered back to Pretoria, where he remained for the rest of his time as Chief of the Staff—his final probation for supreme command. Only when summoned by Roberts—who on account of his daughter's illness spent the later weeks of his command in its healthier atmosphere—did the now Commander-in-Chief-elect repair to Johannesburg, a place for which he had little liking.

1 Kitchener was loud in praise of the work of the Australians, with whom for the first time he made close acquaintance.

CHAPTER XLI

On November 29, 1900, the great work imposed on him being accomplished, Roberts left Pretoria to assume the office of Commander-in-Chief in England, and Kitchener succeeded to the command of the Army in South Africa.[1] The happiest relations between the two men had been maintained throughout the past harassing year, and were to be lifelong. In his first letter to Brodrick after taking over Kitchener said: "I am quite devoted to Lord Roberts, and we have never had, during the most anxious and difficult times, a single moment of unpleasantness. He has always been most kind, and in recommending me to succeed him out here he has shown that he approved of my services" (3.12.00).

On his way through Natal Lord Roberts cheerfully announced that the war was practically over, and alluded to the remaining Boer forces as "a few marauding bands." The speech was doubly unfortunate; it served for some time to belittle, in the

1 Lord Roberts telegraphed to the Queen: "I have just made over command of Your Majesty's Army in South Africa to Lord Kitchener, in whose judgment, discretion, and valour I have the greatest confidence." Two months later, during his last interview with the Queen at Osborne, he spoke of Kitchener's self-suppression, his eagerness to undertake the hardest and most difficult tasks, his scorn of notoriety, and his personal loyalty. He said further that Kitchener was the only officer of superior rank who never shrank from responsibility, however great, or from tasks, however arduous. "From start to finish there was not a cloud or difference" between them.

public eye, the importance of the task just laid on Kitchener's broad, if rather weary, shoulders, while the Government, taking its cue from the retiring Commander-in-Chief, exhorted his successor to finish up his job quickly and cheaply.

Nobody was more anxious than Kitchener to set an early term to a war for which in truth he never had much appetite; no one was less anxious to spend an unnecessary British shilling in doing so. Unhappily the Boers took a diametrically opposite view to that entertained by Lord Roberts and the Government, and determined that the war, whatever its later character and ultimate issue, should be for England as lengthy and as expensive and as exasperating as they could render it.

The new War Minister, Mr. Brodrick, had already put out some praiseworthy, if not altogether practical, propositions: "The Cabinet have been carefully considering the position in South Africa, and as you will, we assume, have taken up the Command before this letter reaches you, I venture to tell you frankly what is in our minds, in order that you may consider to what extent it is possible to give effect to it" (24.11.00). The burden of the letter was a possible reduction of the Army in South Africa. The new Commander-in-Chief was reminded that during the last twelvemonth the Army had grown from 100,000 to 230,000 men, the drafts exceeding the number invalided home, and all the regiments being at high strength.

There were now only six battalions of the line left at home, and thirteen newly formed battalions. The whole Militia force had been out for nearly a year; thirty battalions which had volunteered were already

in South Africa, and there were five in the Mediterranean and at St. Helena.

No sacrifice would be grudged to end the war, but the Cabinet was wondering whether the resources were being fully utilised. Only 8000 Boers were now in the field, 16,000 were prisoners, and there were other heavy losses. Was strength being wasted on too extended an effort? If the two railway lines and the chief centres like the Rand were held and the strength of the movable columns strictly limited, might it not be possible to reduce the infantry, lessen expenditure, save revenue, and guard certain districts from devastation? The war had cost eighty millions, with a monthly expenditure of two and a half millions. The strain was great, but "we know well that you are an economist, and that you will face the problem in all its bearings, and I need not assure you of support."

This letter, with its ominous announcement of a shortage at home in men and money, was scarcely exhilarating reading for a man who was just taking up weighty and complex responsibilities, who was not improbably depressed by the natural staleness of his troops after a year's continuous work, and who had reason to be perturbed by the too frequent surrenders which had recently occurred.

The Minister's communication reached the new Commander at Bloemfontein, where he had hurried down to speed up a chase of De Wet. The Boer leader, pushed out of the Transvaal in October, was heading for Cape Colony. On his way he had made a special point of attacking Dewetsdorp—the home of his childhood—which, loosely fortified and languidly defended, had surrendered on November 23.

From Bloemfontein Kitchener began the first of a series of letters to Roberts which with few breaks extended over a period of years:

This place seems a very sleepy hollow—quite as if no war existed—officers riding about with ladies, probably of Boer extraction, as if they had nothing to do. I think, until we get the police out into the country, we had better not appoint any more officers to civil work; they have absolutely nothing to do and set a bad example.[1] (4.12.00.)

And some days later:

De Wet has been giving us much trouble; but I think we have prevented his determined attempt to get into the Colony, and I hope we may bring him to book, though with such a slippery customer it is no easy matter. (9.12.00.)

Kitchener returned on December 11 to Pretoria and faced as perplexing a puzzle as was ever set to a British general. Lord Roberts and the Government might well have said that the war was over, but they should have added that another of a wholly different character had already begun. Curiously enough, on the very day that Roberts resigned the command to his chief lieutenant there was fought the last of the battles which followed the orthodox prescription proper for the Natal campaign and the advance on Pretoria. Paget's victory at Hartebeestfontein was one of those which had been essentially necessary for the invasion and occupation of a country, but of little real value against an enemy who was now for the most part fighting with no

1 "It is evidently very lucky," Roberts wrote in reply, "that you were able to go to Bloemfontein and stir them all up. . . . You will, I hope, take care to have a guard always about you. You must not run any unnecessary risk." (9.12.00.)

definite plan and feeding from no definite base. It was the fashion to say that the war had drifted into a guerilla campaign carried on by roving bands and conducted by irregular leaders; the truth was that the Boers, reduced in numbers and deprived of sources of supply, had reviewed their situation, reaffirmed the righteousness of their cause, rejected any half-hearted combatants, and, with a fine contempt for military formulae, deliberately inaugurated operations which were peculiarly adapted to their arena and organisation.

His trained insight into racial characteristics helped Kitchener to recognise that the Boers' decision to proceed with the war, or rather to start another war, was no mere exhibition of petulant defiance or proof of blind obstinacy, but an assertion, sentimental perhaps rather than logical, of national character and individual grit. "Your object is not conquest, but simply supremacy to Delagoa Bay," had been Sir Bartle Frere's prescient words twenty-five years earlier. Kitchener's grand object was not the bare conquest of the Boers in arms against him, but the absorption of a free white people, and the transfusion into the British Commonweal of the very spirit with which, for eighteen long months, he was to wrestle. What were the means at his disposal? What were his methods? What his measure of success?

The first thing was to tell the Government frankly how matters stood:

I fear, from your letter of November 24, you will have been much disappointed at the recent development of the war out here. As I telegraphed to you, there has been a

very considerable revival of hostilities everywhere, and many more Boers are now in the field than there were a short time ago.

You may be sure I will do my utmost to reduce expenditure, and I have, I think, recently been able to save between £80,000 and £90,000 a month by abolishing Weil's contract for transport, and taking the whole into our own hands. When I get a little more time, I will look further into expenditure now going on. I think a great number of useless hangers-on may be cleared out. The want of care of the horses supplied to the troops has already been frequently and strongly pointed out to all concerned, but without much effect. I shall, I fear, have to make an example of some Commanding Officer to bring it home to all how serious this matter is. Expenditure in the English Army is not so easy to control as in the Egyptian Army. And there does not appear to me to be a proper feeling amongst officers that unnecessary expenditure of Government money is culpable, and that they are bound to look after the Government interests when dealing with contractors.

The transport expenditure shocked me considerably when I looked into it.[1] I think now it will be worked economically. . . . I think that possibly a careful and rigid examination in the W.O. into contracts and current market prices might lead to good results, but I fancy you would have to get some one that has no connection with the Service to do it.

There is no doubt that many of the troops out here are stale and tired, and any fresh troops to replace them would be an immense advantage.

The difficulties of the present situation here are that we have to protect very long lines of railway and road, and to supply garrisons to the many towns and villages that have

1 Not only was this expenditure immediately overhauled with a view to future economy, but Kitchener insisted on a firm of contractors disgorging a large sum of money which he held, and proved, to have been a gross overpayment.

been occupied all over the country; whilst the mobile columns we have in the field are principally taken up in escorting supplies to the various garrisons. We have, therefore, no striking force of any importance, and it is most difficult to find troops in any case of emergency, such as the Cape Colony invasion, for instance. If we withdraw the garrisons, it has a bad effect, as the Boers at once put up their flag and start a sort of government again.

I estimate that there are still 20,000 Boers out on commando in the two Colonies. Some officers put the number considerably higher. These men are not always out on commando, but return at intervals to their farms and live as most peaceful inhabitants, probably supplying the nearest British garrison with forage, milk, and eggs, until they are again called out to take the place of others in the field. Just now, they have apparently got them all out, with the result that they suddenly show in considerable numbers, and act with great boldness when they get a chance. Owing to the vastness of the country the Boers can roam at pleasure, and being excessively mobile they are able to surprise any post not sufficiently on the alert. Every farm is to them an intelligence agency and a supply depot, so that it is almost impossible to surround or catch them.

I sincerely hope the people of England will be patient. The Boers trust to wearing us out, but, of course, time tells heavily against them. To meet some of the difficulties, I have determined to bring in the women from the more disturbed districts to laagers near the railway, and offer the burghers to join them there. We shall then be able to work on the feelings of the men to get back to their farms, out of which they will be only kept by De Wet and Co. The burghers are now in many cases coerced into going out on commando, and do not like it at all.

I am sorry I cannot give you better news. I will let you know at once when I see hopes of peace in the near future. (Kitchener to Brodrick, 20.12.00.)

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